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# GEORGE MOORE

by

HUMBERT WOLFE



HAROLD SHAYLOR

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W.C.

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## Publisher's Note

WHEN critics and biographers seek to elucidate the mysteries of purpose, policy and personality in relation to a bygone author, they are given general approval. But there is a lifting of eyebrows if they deal in similar fashion with the life and work of contemporary writers. Why this should be so is itself a mystery: and it suggests the question—if anything may usefully and legitimately be said about an author and his work at all, why cannot it be said while he is yet among us?

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has invited a number of the more distinguished and individual of our younger poets and novelists to deal with them intimately and critically.

Thus Mr. Humbert Wolfe has written this study of George Moore, and Mr. Louis Golding that of James Joyce. The late Mr. Walter Jerrold has written the volume on Alfred Noyes, the editor will write on William H. Davies, Miss Viola Garvin on William Butler Yeats, and Mr. David Glass Larg on André Maurois. Other volumes will follow.

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Thus the volumes will illuminate the human side of present-day literature as well as make a contribution to its criticism.

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## GEORGE MOORE

### Chapter I. *A Day of George Moore*

WHATEVER the gold lettering on the cover may allege, the title of this book is "A day of George Moore." Not, of course, a day with George Moore, which would mean something different and ridiculous, but a day in which Moore glances from thought to thought, from memory to memory, and through emotion after emotion going, as is his wont, with every drag of the tide. It is the method that he would himself have chosen, or rather that he has chosen, anticipating not only Proust but James Joyce. And of Joyce I would begin by remembering an incident when the young master came to visit the old in Ebury Street. I can't draw the great bow of Ulysses, James Joyce, said George Moore. And why should you since you've sent arrow after arrow into the gold with a more fastidious weapon? But I've brought you this de luxe edition of the French translation of

the book. It might, I thought, interest you. You're right, Joyce, and I'm glad to have it. But don't forget that I can still read English. Probably, Joyce thought, he means even if I can't write it—but we must allow him his caprice. All his life he has said the unexpected, even the outrageous thing, in order to study the effect on his victim. I suppose that it's my turn to figure in the specimen-bottle. But Joyce said nothing more, and George Moore was no doubt disappointed at his visitor's self-control.

I might have asked the Editor to let me rechristen the book, but that would have been a nuisance. He would have answered in his gentle Derbyshire voice that after all the series had been announced a year ago, and he would have been far too amiable to remind me that my volume was already months overdue. But he won't mind, I thought, how I write it, as long as I stick to my subject. And indeed there's no other way that I could write. I couldn't conceivably compose a modern picture of George Moore—the man—in that manner which will be so odious fifty years hence. I wouldn't have cared—even if I'd known the date of his birth, which I don't, to have begun thus: “Florence Nightingale had

just sailed for the Crimea, leaving Herbert to regret, and England to reprove, her. Charles Dickens was taking the waters in the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, and stroking his curly side-whiskers in earnest meditation. Robert Browning was ascending *per obscura ad alta*. The crinoline and the knife-board omnibus were engaged in a skirt to skirt struggle. The age of Anne was dead. And at Moore Hall in Ireland between the racehorses and the discussions as to the sale of the outlying farms there slipped into existence an unremarkable child. George Moore was born a Catholic in order to emphasize and underline the fact that he was to live the Muse's Protestant." Thank God that I don't have to reconstruct or recompose. For all I've got to do is to copy down in a reasonably fair hand extracts from "Confessions of a Young Man," "Memoirs of my Dead Life," "Hail and Farewell," "Avowals," and "Conversations in Ebury Street." Indeed scissors and paste would do the work for me much better than my battered Eversharp (and let me say that mine is always blunt, a circumstance upon which I should have liked to write to the American manufacturers. But I don't suppose that they'd answer.) Nor need I attempt a professor's evaluation of

Moore's writings. I should, of course, have attached a bibliography with dates as I did (or as some amiable sub-editor did) to my *Encyclopædia Britannica* article. But I won't, unless the Editor and the Publishers insist. And even if they do I shan't trace the progress of the author through "*The Mummer's Wife*" and "*Evelyn Innes*" to "*Esther Waters*" and consummation in "*The Brook Kerith*." Why should I? All contemporary criticism is merely an exhibition of fugitive prejudice. Much better let anything that emerges express itself objectively, as though I had been preparing a sensitive surface like the ones we used to buy for a penny at Carter's shop in Manningham Lane. One laid a coin, a rose leaf or a key against it, and presently the object was reproduced with something that it had borrowed from the sun. But which window shall I choose for the first exposure? Not the study, I think, with George Moore groping from shelf to shelf, beginning with Shelley and deserting him for Gautier and the Frenchmen. I won't yet, I mean, show how his writing is all brush-work learned in Julien's studio. Though George Moore believes that he has rejected all that, everywhere his writing bears the trace of the careful eye

which considers whether "cette jambe porte," and of the mind which half-reluctantly admits that "dessiner par les masses," will not, after all, do. I should, though, have liked to have caught him there with a casual ray of sun striking his hand as it disturbed the dust on the shelves that harboured "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall." George Moore is interested in hands, and in himself, but I doubt whether he's ever seen his own. They are in any case too small for his arm, and too soft for his character. If the sun illuminated them truly, it would let an X-ray strike through and exhibit the firm bony structure. He would be standing at first with his back to the light, as he mused upon the shelves, and you'd notice that, though he has an impression that he was something of a dandy, in fact his clothes are curiously untailored. And so all the painters who made their proofs by painting him suggest. Not really a bookish back, you would reflect, and certainly not that of the frequenter either of the long rooms of a Duchess or of a thieves' den in the Rue de la Gaieté. Difficult to form any impression: and little easier when he turns to face the light, as he faced it, say, when he fled England in the Boer War for Ireland, or as he was engilded by its caress

some early morning when he walked on his small, neat feet across Merrion Square with A.E., A.E. at moments looking like a picture by Blake of Jehovah, at others like an old English sheep dog, and still at others like both. You would observe that Moore's body and head were in a sense strangers. The torso, under the jacket-coat, would seem a little long for the legs, and the legs would appear to be dubious of the reliability of those unusual feet. The head would add a final touch of confusion with the pink self-indulgent cheeks, the careless moustache, and the alarming directness of the unflinching blue eyes. If one held one's hands to them, as to a fire, there'd be a cold spot in the middle of each palm like the impact of liquid air.

I don't propose to continue the attempt at portraiture, which in fact baffled a whole generation of New English Art Club painters. So difficult and so exciting did they find these antagonisms that Max Beerbohm drew a mass-meeting of Chelsea models protesting against the reduction in business provoked by George Moore's return to town. Perhaps Thomas Moult and the Publishers will save me the trouble by letting me have one or the other of the portraits reproduced. But, even if they

won't, it's useless to attempt with words what half a dozen of the cunningest crayons of the time have missed. So, as Shakespeare himself asserts, let him pass for a man. And, indeed, George Moore himself, a little spitefully perhaps, bade me call this book "Portrait of a Man." The last thing in the world that I'd call it, I cried, you wouldn't have me make you the last line of Kipling's 'If', and I know no other generic Man. And didn't you yourself in 'Confessions' admit to what you (wrongly) pretend are feminine traits in your approach to persons and books? Certainly it shan't be 'Portrait of a Man', and you only suggested the title to unnerve me, because you feel that, as I'm bound to fail in any case, I may as well fail on the largest scale possible. Well, I'll fail, of course, but in my own way.

I didn't say that you couldn't write, Humbert Wolfe, only that for me writing is more of a digestive process than you will allow it to be. You are always catching the 10.50 for a Conference at Geneva, when you ought to be expunging every word that you have written. Each word ought to be rocked in its own cradle, and only admitted to the nursery after every inch of it has been washed and powdered.

Very well then, since I've no time for ablution and cosmetics, I'll leave both the portrait and the study. But what room shall I choose? I'll not have the appartement "in one of the old houses in Rue de la Tour des Dames"—a room combining "the fancies of an imagination that suggested the collaboration of a courtesan of high degree and a fifth-rate artist." Ponsonby Marshall, Julien's studio, the life of young Moore as a pupil-painter in Paris will no doubt force themselves in at the moment, which seems convenient to them. For the instant, while I have some measure of control, I'll start with the bedroom. Because George Moore has insisted on its predominance in his life without realising that the more he divulged its secrets the more he acquitted himself of the charges against his spiritual integrity.

A tendentious legend he has breathed about himself, bubble-light, and yet one that, such is the curiosity of man, is harder to prick than all the foolish gossip about Byron. George Moore has elevated to the pitch of a faith a point of view of the Nineties with which he was fundamentally out of sympathy. It is for this reason that I find Susan Mitchell's work worthless. She knew George Moore far better

than I did, and if women really have antennæ that stretch further and are more delicate than ours, she should have seen that George Moore was seeking to impose on his own character the unity that he imposes on a story—but in this case an alien and a studied unity. Susan Mitchell didn't or wouldn't see this, and I've no doubt she overheard many malicious things said in George Moore's absence in Dublin drawing-rooms touching on his alleged weakness for imaginary love affairs. Imaginary they are but not in Susan Mitchell's sense. They have the reality that belongs only to the creative mind, and therefore, whether they happened or no, are more practically existent than the Nelson column. Their importance, however, is not for the light that they throw on the man but on the artist. They are compositions like a page of Pater's machicolated prose with lawns behind the battlements for idyllic loves to wander. Nor let any dispute the word "idyllic." Their movement is Theocritean with the formal grace that never was on land or sea, but only in the printed page.

Such an idyll I mean, rounded as an emerald or cameo of Gautier's, that George Moore draws in the lovers at Orelay. In the preface to "Celibate Lives" he develops

his theory of the melodic line in story-telling. I am not sure why he should have chosen an image from music rather than from painting to which his work is so much more akin. But the meaning is clear, and clearest in its reference to Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson—applauded as the best of all story-tellers by his period—is roundly accused by George Moore of being incapable of the narrative art. The adventures he recounts are picaresque, which is to say that they happen independently of the characters. They are charming and lively, but they do not illuminate the curiosities of the human heart in the person of the hero and his friends. They have therefore only the decorative value of beads on a string. They do not, like precious stones, catch and reflect unexpected colour and virtue. So that when in "Memoirs of my Dead Life" George Moore mused upon the episode at Orelay, he composed it as deliberately as Degas or Monet with an exterior subject before them. Indeed, the early days in the studio have left an ineffaceable impression upon him as a writer. It is necessary for him as for a painter to have the actual objects of his study before his mind, if not before his eyes. It is then his business to group the masses, to develop light and

shade, to foreshorten, lengthen, add and deduct as in their living volition these objects demand. Thus they become not only a part of the writer's mind but of the permanent world of the fully imagined.

If I had asked George Moore whether there had been a woman to whom the name Doris is attributed, and if there had been any incidents akin to those in the Orelay composition, he would, I think, have restrained a natural resentment by reminding himself that he has somewhere declared that we ought to know the truth about writers because otherwise we shall not be able to decide whether imagination can wholly take the place of experience. He might have read over to me again that silly and pretentious letter from Pater (written, I am sure, when he was wearing his odious dog-skin gloves) which begins, "My dear audacious Moore." But that, I should have replied, proves nothing. For it would be no less audacious to invent stories that must inevitably scandalize the bourgeoisie than in cold fact to have been their hero and villain. In any case, I should urge, and with unassailable force, nothing so elegant as the Orelay adventure ever came to pass in this rag-tail world. It is sketched in with an inevitable progression that

belongs to Art and not to Nature. There is first the indeterminate charm of the girl permitting the youngish man, to whom the name George Moore is attached, to beguile her tedium while the days before her marriage drift slowly by in Southern France. She is drawn very lightly, a lingering hint of Lefebvre scored out to make way for a harder impressionist stroke. She waits at the edge of the picture with the lines of her body denoting expectancy. But though the lines are slight, they are more truthful than tender. She is no Cydaline except that she indicates the classic retreat from the Faun with the hopeful, hesitant look backwards over the shoulder. And the George-Moore shepherd has, we may be sure, no crook, and if he be faun, however small his feet, they have not assumed the goat, nor have the eyes the satyr slope. Far from it, since that would be to deny the melodic line as displayed in the Impressionist appetite for ordered and marching detail. The centre of the picture is occupied by a young man in the loathsome ill-fitting jacket suit of the period. God knows how any woman could support creatures clothed like uneasy propositions in Euclid. But the eye of love, as Moore asserts, can overlook the inches of a dwarf, or,

at most, if pressed, admit that perhaps the beloved is something short. It would not therefore embarrass the lady, even if her figure were hinted through her own dress, that her wooer wore collars that rasped his chin, and a coat cut to resemble Margate Parade (if there is one). The lover is projected as proof that romance consists not in the noble postures of Hero and Leander but in the persistent and fugitive encounters of not wholly matched bodies and spirits. The experience because of its foregone conclusion, its moth-like doom, acquires its poignancy and its importance. We have therefore for Phyllis and Corydon, Doris and George Moore, as formal as XVIIIth century fancies, but with the reality that continuous and consistent development of character into incident implies. We have, in an appropriate setting of the Gallic scene, two figures of the Nineties, but they must be given enough verisimilitude to carry the burden of their story. What George Moore had behind his eyes was a composition in which a girl should be prepared to give herself to a not wholly sympathetic lover on the eve of her marriage to another man. Such things may happen, no doubt do happen, but that, as Aristotle pointed out, is of no importance. It is necessary for

the artist to make them happen, to persuade us that such things can be. How to accomplish this without over-stepping the limits of artistic probability? George Moore conceives that the girl might snatch a Cleopatra night on her way home, sprinkling its memory like a sprig of lavender among her bridal finery. Gradually the two figures approach. Doris becomes less indeterminate, the lover no longer Bergamesque. The upshot becomes whisperingly possible. But how and where? It is to be an affair of the moment neither to be recaptured nor repeated. The scenery must fit the something reluctantly romantic that the most arduous cynicism cannot wholly abate, and not only that. The culmination must be implicit in the character of the chief actor. For Cydaline to swoon without more ado in her Faun's arms, when the hour of the shepherd had struck, would ruin all. And, therefore, it is described in detail how unsuitable to a climax were the appointments of the bed-chamber at Orelay. The hotel was no worse than another with its square white front, its green shutters, and the courtyard with a hint of plane-trees. But mustiness and furniture bought wholesale are discouraging for a man of fantastic perceptions. So that there is con-

jured up at the end of a back-passage a room of a great period that had lain idle, perhaps, since hoops and powder had graced its gilded comeliness. There might the tale have its ending with enough fastidious eccentricity to make it as real or as unreal as Congreve.

An idyll, I say, true to the melodic line, as true as all the other tales of Alice, the writer of "Extract from a Letter" in the "Confessions," as Gabrielle, Countess von Hoenstadt, and as Stella. One by one they defile—these women—illustrating with a perfect aptness the movement of their lover's life, and each the creation not of time only or first, but of the character of George Moore. With how perfect a stagecraft (never, alas! achieved in his actual plays) does George Moore bring in Alice Howard. Ponsonby Marshall is a type of "the New Arabian Nights" but brought back to earth out of the smoke of the magic bottle by Moore's passionate inquiry into the intricacies of the human heart. Brilliant, dashing, and of a chic! With a studio over whose immense fireplace "hung an iron pot on a chain." Pot and Turkish draperies in the background, Lewis snatches his fiddle and plays Stradella's "Chant d'Eglise"—one of those airs perhaps to which poor Wilfred Holmes in "Celibate

Lives" devoted his life. First then the fiddle and Stradella, then an organ upon which "he strummed snatches of Verdi's 'Requiem,' until a young girl entered the room out of breath. 'Lewis!' She stopped suddenly on seeing me." Naturally! since she was being introduced into the presence of her creator—an Unamuno or Pirandello situation with the character meeting the author. Indeed, it is only the Spaniard or the Italian with their queer twist which so admirably confuses life and letters, that would appreciate this self-dramatization of George Moore. Alice Howard is the name that this marvellously presented creature is given, and she could not have ended except as a great courtesan, borrowing something perhaps but only a little from Balzac's "Grandeurs." Another Cora Pearl, Moore says of her, importing in that comparison all those memories of the paper-covers of books discreetly set out in the windows of shabby little shops of which the door is always left half-open, the mingling of the real with the impossible that is the final triumph of art. Alice Howard and Lewis Ponsonby Marshall—what a gorgeous projection of Paris pupil-painterhood in the Seventies. Lewis must inevitably fail in spite of his superficial gift, must

batten on Moore, and must at last be put away. Though Moore will meet him later in a coat of an astonishing cut and bitterly regret the quarrel because he will be denied the chance of learning where and how the thing was tailored. And Alice, having served her turn, will return amiably into the bottle from which she was evoked, making way for the writer of the "extract from a letter."

Lewis with his broken nose and his soft violet eyes and George Moore divided their time (as how would they not, if the melodic line were to be preserved) between thieves' kitchens and the long drawing-rooms of the Fauborg. How often did the two not utter frightful oaths in the Rue de la Gaieté approving some projected burglary, the while they wondered what Madame la Duchesse de — would think if she saw, if she heard them now. Alice Howard belongs to the Tavern, but the other as inevitably to the Salon. And how could her letter but teem with reference to the Count of B—, the Marquess of G— (a distant cousin of my husband), and the ball the Marquise gave at which the writer danced the cotillion with L—, the sale of the author's effects at which the writer nearly bought back her satin shoes that hung by the

side of the bed as matchboxes. How right, and how saved from the du Maurier touch by the cruel reflection as the letter is laid aside "she can feel, and she has lived her life, and felt it decently and sincerely, like a moth caught in a gauze curtain" or a moth drawn to a candle where bent over a desk a great writer steadily dreamed, and remembered and wrote.

Gabrielle may perhaps belong more appropriately to that part of the book (if one should later suggest itself) in which the fact that the gift of the theatre has been denied George Moore is canvassed. Odd how fitful that gift is, and how irresistible the attraction of the drama for supreme performers in verse and prose, and how fatal. Browning, Tennyson, Henry James—to name three only—each with a towering gift, each bewildered by the foot-lights, and George Moore is of that company. I wish that I might have had the chance of asking Yeats, with whom Moore collaborated in "Dermuid and Grania," what was missing in that unrivalled grasp of the situation in itself. But probably he wouldn't know, because Yeats, in spite of all the withdrawn tenderness of "The Countess Cathleen," isn't really a playwright. He imposed the form upon himself

because he saw in the theatre a vital instrument for the resuscitation of the Irish spirit. But by the side of a natural master of the stage—Sheridan or even Barrie—he is awkward and self-conscious. No, I don't think that he could help me, and indeed I imagine that the truth is that playwrights, like poets, are born not made. The same might be said of all artists, but would it be true? For, if ever a writer deliberately made himself, it is George Moore. And George Moore lived to write not only "Hail and Farewell" but "The Brook Kerith."

But this isn't germane to my immediate purpose, which is to add the Countess von Hoenstadt to the gallery. I believe that in his latest book, "In Minor Keys," George Moore intends to publish the actual letters that he received from her Viennese prototype. I do not know whether he will introduce and arrange them, though he asserts that he will not alter a single word. But even so they would belong to the borderlands of the imagination, and form part of the character of the man to whom they were addressed. Who has not heard of the mysterious woman of fashion that writes letters from a strange capital to some great author whose book has charmed her? They begin—

these letters—with an impersonal admiration rising in accordance with her temperament and gift for literary expression, to avowals, to suggestions, and last to demands. But it is left to George Moore to find in the letters an opportunity of displaying his own character by leaving them unanswered or at any rate by failing to respond to the invitation. He would not in life, nor if he had written the thing as a tale instead of a happening, have spoiled a charming episode by converting it into a comedy of errors as in “The Coming of Gabrielle.” He would never have sent a secretary to impersonate him in Vienna, and to win the affections of the unknown correspondent. He would perhaps have bought his ticket only to tear it up, and send the fragments to the lady as a symbol, retaining the return-half. Certainly he would keep the letters, because they are at once a tribute to the great craft of which he is the head, and at the same time are one of these curiosities of the soul that he so passionately collects. Yes! I think that the Countess may safely assume her place with Alice Howard and the unnamed writer of the extract. But if the actual letters are printed? That will make no difference. She is a phase in the author’s mind as much as the possibly

authentic lady who came from some Western State in the Union to beseech George Moore to collaborate with her in founding a line of authors for Texas, was it? or Minnesota, I cannot remember. But whether she existed or not, and whether her desire was granted or denied, and whatever the result of the fulfilment, if fulfilled, she, like the Countess, is still of the stuff of thought. The flesh and blood is the accident, the arrangement into the pattern of George Moore's life the reality.

I walked away from Ebury Street with the picture of George Moore by the fire in the dining-room in my mind. All that I've written in this Chapter, I felt, was merely a re-composition of things he had written and had said. But it wants the grain of Attic salt and I don't see how that is to be reproduced. I haven't "my dear audacious Moore's" courage which has enabled him to prefer literary truth to friendship. I could say, of course, that half his sallies into the thickets after nymphs were designed to provoke reactions in the listener. "You always had a knack of rubbing people up the wrong way," wrote the anonymous Marquise. But it isn't a knack. It's an artistic policy. How, for example, to reconcile the fervent Protestantism of "Farewell"

with the Ninetyish “Why should you bother with the Virgin Mary when you’ve got Venus?” except on that hypothesis. There are, of course, a dozen Moores, as there are a dozen inhabitants of every mortal heart. But there must be some limit to the degree of internecine conflict, some ultimate and regnant unity. It isn’t possible that George Moore, at heart like his Cabaner, a saint of letters by virtue of his remorseless integrity, should be unable to control, if he wished it, the gamin who can find nothing better to say of a flutter of clouds than that they remind him of the lace on a woman’s drawers. They didn’t remind him of that pathetic relic of Victorian costume, they don’t remind him of it. But it might bring a blush to one cheek, or a glitter to another’s eye; an effect, if rather crude, being immediately achieved.

And that’s what I mean by calling this “A day of George Moore.” He lets his mind drift from point to point with a fastidious impressionism interrupted, spiced and sometimes marred by the irresistibility of the unusual and —to be frank—the faintly lewd. A Robin Goodfellow who pulls away the stool, and lets the milkmaid crash—as Shakespeare said (though the school texts alter it)—on her bum.

George Moore would have underlined the word, or perhaps changed it to rump. For he actually had the idea—or pretended to have the idea—of calling his new book on a Greek theme, not, as it is to be called, “Aphrodite in Aulis,” but “The Fair Rump of Aphrodite.” I expect that he laughed inwardly at my puzzled and alarmed face. I can conceive his recording the incident, if he had thought it worth while, with reference not to the book but to my reaction. Something old-maidish in him or perhaps only the lack of blood that spoils so much of the writing of to-day, he would think. And he would have let his mind revert not to Swinburne’s verse, but to the spirit behind :

“ What ailed us, O Gods, to desert you  
For creeds that refuse and restrain,  
Come down and redeem us from virtue,  
Our Lady of Pain.”

There was, after all, some justification for the revolt against a Christianity that if asked suddenly for the birthplace of the Saviour, was likely enough to reply, Tarsus. Indeed, Paul and not Jesus was the Christ of Victorianism, and, like Paul, the age was acutely conscious

of the flesh, but unlike Paul unable to conquer it by prayer, by fasting and by vision. The Victorians fought with beasts in public but bought them elaborate dog-collars in private. It wasn't England alone, of course, that swung George Moore into that rebellion. To the Paris of Manet, Monet, Degas and Renoir a mock-Puritanism must have seemed as startling and as disgusting as leprosy. Because the French, and in less degree George Moore, have never understood that the English do genuinely love moral virtue, as though they had made a youthful marriage with her. They may have their infidelities, but these do not attain the truth and tenderness of that first nuptial. It is a part of the English strength, and it's useless to rail against it as though it were a notifiable disease. To do that is to ignore one of the fundamental secrets of the island-race. But God! how irritating it can be, and how, when glorified with plush and dead birds under a glass bell, it provides an inextinguishable theme for ribaldry and revolt.

Not, of course, that George Moore under-rates or misunderstands Paul. Indeed, I should think that secretly he finds in him the man-god of Protestantism as opposed to Jesus the woman-god of Catholicism. There wasn't

room enough for his bald mountain-greatness in "The Brook Kerith," and therefore George Moore wrote "The Apostle," which never satisfied him. He has now re-written and re-composed it as "The Passing of the Essenes" after a period of seven years. But though he could and does appreciate Paul, Paulinism was as abhorrent to him as scamped and dishonest writing. It affects him as water does a cat, and he shakes it off deliberately with a graceful movement of a not too carefully sheathed claw.

So much so that, I concluded, you might assume that for George Moore love was always and only at its highest an affair of the bright breast of the nymph in the brake, at worst a form of male self-expression that took no account of the woman's point of view—a sort of inverted Longfellowism, maintaining with equal fatuity that life was unreal, life was frivolous. But in fact it isn't so, because we have the tale of Stella, and the heart-breaking discussions with Colonel Moore on the adoption of one of his sons.

I have called it the tale of Stella of set purpose, because this lady, like Alice Howard and all the others, does duty as much to letters as to life. It was wholly in George Moore's

character that she should be a painter able sensitively to appreciate and expound the theory of her art, that she should know and move among flowers, that in place of a baroque studio, a bedroom of Louis Quatorze, or an unimaginable room in a London flat, she should instal herself as mistress of an Irish château near those charming little dumps of slightly-raised earth known as the Dublin mountains. It was in his character that all this should be so, since it was demanded as the melodic conclusion of his life in love. It doesn't, therefore, make this last idyll in the series fictitious, or more fictitious than the others. It was "Farewell" and the atmosphere of soft caducity was imperative.

I don't suppose in choosing the name George Moore had Swift's Stella in mind, nor do I imagine that he was drawing any literary parallels. It would have been pleasant to wile an hour or two away comparing and contrasting the two relationships. For Swift from the opposite point of view was as profoundly vexed by the life of the sexes as George Moore. The later Anglo-Irishman is, in fact, far the saner of the two, the result, the psychoanalysts would say, of yielding to his complexes instead of fiercely inhibiting them as did

the savage Dean. Aldous Huxley—not unlike Swift in his meticulous observation of the obscenities he creates by his abhorrence of them—finds that Swift hated the bowels with an intensity that suggests mania. It is, he thinks, the coarse clue to such an abomination as “Portrait of a Fair Nymph.” On the other hand, George Moore takes a friendly interest in his tripes, and watches their performances with a pleased boyish interest. The Dean, like Socrates, bids his wretched eyes gloat on what he detests, George Moore gives them their fill, actually beseeching them to remember. The reaction of each is self-conscious and in the up-shot inartistic, though in both cases there is enough genius to make the thing the background only of a picture where both of them—the Dean and George Moore—have their Stella. Nobody knows why Swift and his love never married, and George Moore has not explained why he and his Stella didn’t set up house together. In “Farewell” he plays with the idea of marriage, and contemplates the education of the young, but that train of thought is provoked not directly by Stella, but by his controversy with the Colonel. The truth probably is—though George Moore never expressed it to himself consciously—that mar-

riage would not have rounded off the tale. It wouldn't in his phrase have been a "pretty story"; it would have been a little like signing a Leighton with the majestic name of Monet. It was to a different conclusion that the tale inevitably moved. "You don't love me enough," Stella complained one evening between the flowers, meaning by that quite literally that he no longer gave her in plenty the physical translation of the spirit. George Moore had seen the leaf redden on the tree: it was time for it to fall to the West wind and be swept away by that powerful enchanter. Impossible now to weave a lover's wreath of myrtle out of those sere and veined spoils of autumn. Life and art demanded and obtained a different and more humanly demonstrable termination. How often have I not heard George Moore deplore some writer's inability or refusal to realise the artistic necessities of his own tale. Ann Bronte, he thinks, in "The Tenant of Wildfall Hall," wrote one of the most considerable novels in the English tongue. It has zest and that is rare in all writing and almost unknown in English. But I wish, he says, that I'd been by to tell her how to compose her tale. For I'd have shown her that the diary form was impossible and I'd have bade

her have the warm word of mouth instead of the cold page to come between the reader and the narrative. Moreover, the young man should not have waited. He should have made her his some wild Northern day, with rooks cawing in a flaw of wind, and then afterwards they could have pieced out the story by a great fire with the new warm love in and the old love out. It's a mistake not to have the courage of your own characters. George Moore, at least, made no such mistake with his Stella. He had to tell her that he was no longer the man that he had been. He told her at the end of the chestnut avenue that "the plain truth is that I must cease to be your lover unless my life is to be sacrificed." Years before, he pretends as a boy he had set his dogs after a cat, even hunting and killing a beautiful white one for whose life the laundry maids had pleaded. So Stella too pleaded in vain for the life of the white love that had run to her breast for shelter. The dogs slew it there. "I will conquer this obsession," she cried. He does not tell us how long after it was when returning from Italy she walked with him in Dublin over Carlisle Bridge, saying that she wished to ask his advice, "I am thinking of being married." At the news he was unduly elated.

A good brutal definite end, but not quite the end. For a little later (or so I gather from the narrative) he was begging his brother the Colonel to give him one of his sons to educate as a Protestant. Religion, no doubt, played its part, but there was also a memory of the white cat that the dogs had torn. George Moore knew, he does not pretend not to know, that loneliness in the fifties has its tooth. He dreams fitfully of a wife who could play Scarlatti and Bach, and would bear him a son with an ear and a facility for musical composition. He might settle down with her in the Clos St. Georges, by a vineyard, in a house built of the rubble left over from the castle at whose altar Henry of Anjou had died. But it was not to be. "Hail and Farewell" had to be written. And on a cold February evening George Moore went below in the ship that bore him away from Ireland forgetful of his native land, of Catholicism, of literature, thinking of the friends he had left behind—A.E. and the rest. He does not mention Stella. He does not need to! The white cat has had her inevitable revenge.

## Chapter II. *Music and Painting*

I BEGAN by disclaiming all pretension of a critical estimate of George Moore, and I don't propose therefore at this stage or indeed at any stage to attempt a full-length portrait of the books. I don't think in any case that they would yield to the head-rest and the plaster balcony of the professional critic. They would walk out of the focus just as the patient photographer whisked the cap off the lens, or, if they remained in the line of vision, they would assume either a smirk or a scowl, and nobody would claim the result as a likeness.

It would, I'm certain, get me far nearer to the meaning of *The Brook Kerith* and *Heloise* if I went back to poetry, music, Ireland, the theatre, religion, Edward Martyn, and A.E.—particularly A.E. But one at a time. Like Zuleika Dobson, I know nothing about music, though I know what I like. I can't therefore tell you if George Moore is

really a musician. I can only say that if he isn't he has amazingly concealed his ignorance. Not only in "Evelyn Innes," but no less in that very remarkable story "Wilfred Holmes" in "Celibate Lives" he writes of music as though he had graduated in a Conservatorium. I know of only two other novels in English that approach "Evelyn Innes" in this insight into musical technique. And neither "Maurice Guest" nor "Martin Schuler" has George Moore's dispassionate interest in music apart from the musician. Both these distinguished books are concerned with the eccentricities and sufferings of musical genius rather than with the science and ardours of composition.

I do not remember to have heard Moore speak of composers among his friends as he constantly does of painters. That may be because whereas painters grow like gooseberries on every bush, the serious composer is a rarer and less accessible fruit. Why then this real emotion for an art alien certainly from painting and in less degree from literature? The painter transmutes the external, but the musician externalizes what is not shareable till he has given it access to other minds. In general I've found very little contact between painters and musicians. Indeed a piano in a

studio arouses, or used to arouse, suspicions of dilettantism. When I lived with Albert Rutherford in Fitzroy Street opposite the studio used by Sickert and John, I don't remember ever meeting a musician or hearing music discussed. And I'm equally sure that the lions of Impressionism roared far too loud for even the strains of "*L'Apres midi d'un Faun*" to enchant the young Irishman's attentive ear.

George Moore himself asserts that "one generation of litterateurs associates itself with painting, the next clings to music." It's true that the poets (often ignorantly) dally with the charm of music—their dangerous rival, and now and again one of them deserts his own art, like W. J. Turner, to pay a half-treacherous tribute to a mode that he cannot command, and understands not intuitively but by force of application. But for a writer to exhibit an almost equal passion for the two arts of music and painting is unusual enough to puzzle. George Moore, as we know, frequented Bayreuth. So confirmed a Wagnerite was he that the signal that brought his "dear Edward" Martyn to the door in Dublin was a leading motif from "*The Ring*".

Was it perhaps Edward's devotion to Palestrina that influenced his friend? I can't think so—because the history of Edward's love for music interests the story-teller rather than the devotee of music. With what cruel and yet how artistically justified a pencil he sketches the lovable, blundering man giving his £10,000 to the Cathedral after long negotiations with the Archbishop, the difficulty being that Edward made it a condition of the gift that Palestrina should be performed, like perpetual prayers or severe candles lighted in his memory. But alas! the "erudite music" left the Cathedral, and poor Edward's money was spent in vain, for its only effect was to empty two churches one after the other. And not only that, when Edward was in Paris buying the masses and motets of the Italian contrapuntalists—Clemens non Papa and Orlando di Lasso—he made the odd mistake of believing the "Adeste Fideles" to be plain-song because he found it printed in the plain chants of the prayer-book. The humour of that mistake completely eludes me, because I have not even a misty notion of what plain-song may be, and as for Clemens non Papa and Orlando di Lasso, as far as I am concerned, they might be delicious inventions. It is however typical of

George Moore's literary courage that he should record what must have been a most galling experience to his "dear Edward." We are all of us acutely sensitive in those matters where we can never be experts. Nor is George Moore content to leave Edward with that one thorn in his heart. His friend's musical blunder leads him to complete his portrait in an imaginary dialogue with Dujardin conducted in the garden at Fontainebleau. He does not spare him (because the needs of the rounded tale insist) even the accounts of Edward's projected drawing-room play in which he wished to introduce a broken anchor as a symbol of hopeless love. And the idea of a broken anchor trundled about between obstructive chairs and probably catching in the carpet squeezes the last essence out of the Palestrina joke. An admirable piece of portraiture, but little likely to please its subject and certainly not indicative of any tenderness that might have generated a musical enthusiasm.

Nor do I think that we can credit George Moore with the sort of Catholic gusto for the arts that belongs to the Renaissance. On the contrary, painting, music and verse apart, not only his interest but his appreciation is

narrowly limited. "The Conversations in Ebury Street" and all that he has written on pure poetry are to me the painstaking efforts of a gifted mind vainly attempting to digest an uncongenial diet. Nobody is entitled to dogmatise in matters of art, and therefore, my impression of George Moore on poetry is personal. He wishes it in some way to be independent of the poet, and to have a pretty turn. And when he illustrates his theory he chooses almost infallibly poetry that is devoid of lyrical emotion. I assume that the moon-mad nightingale would make Moore positively uncomfortable. I don't stress the point here, but make it only as proof that it is not in George Moore's catholicity that we must look for the explanation of his love for music. Probably the truth is that in music George Moore found and finds that strict integrity of form which is his artistic truth. He has used the image of the vase for the perfection of literary composition. He wasn't thinking of a great peacock-blue, because the colour would distract the eye. Nor would it be a Greek vase with the satyrs and nymphs misleading the dawn. No, it would be slender, faintly tinted and perfect in line—perhaps some early triumph from the Sèvres potters. And this George Moore dis-

cerned in music—particularly in Mozart and Chopin. But I can't understand how he could ever have been captured by Wagner. That was a ferocious and disorderly genius, like Hugo's (whom Moore can neither appreciate nor understand) Titanically exuberant. Wagner's vase would have eight handles and be painted inside and out. I expect in his case George Moore yielded to his sense of the period, as in much except his own composition he often did. But for the rest it would be the vase-motive in music that subdued him. And thus it would be that he can speak of Walter Pater cultivating a bland face behind which he would compose his convoluted sentences, and expose the ultimate secret of the story-teller's art in the symbol of "the melodic line."

His pre-occupation with painting is quite another matter. Arranging and composing this aspect of himself like all others, George Moore pictures his entry upon the artistic scene with brilliant casualness. Bored with the Military Academy in London that he had entered at his father's wish, he frequented the domain of a book-making tobacconist. Much, it seems, but not all that his nascent genius exacted was forthcoming among betting slips

and the seedy loungers. The racing stable at Moore Hall in the past, and "Esther Waters" in the future, are the meaning of this period. There was however a "great blonde man" who talked of women and painted them luxuriously. George Moore would have us believe that it was the contemplation of these opulent divinities that led him to the conclusion that it would be jolly to be a painter. Jolly! if George Moore had searched Murray's dictionary he could not have alighted on a more magnificently inappropriate word. Or is it that he was amiably confusing the language of his two worlds in order better to point the contrast. To pass sharply from the "jolliness" of spotting the winner in the 2.30 to the contemplation of "the sweet white peace of antiquity." That perhaps, I suppose; but above all the dictate of the story-teller who knows that all life and all the choices of life are whims of the dust, that stirs for an instant to re-assume its secular nonentity.

Disguise the origins of his entry upon the career of art as he will, George Moore knows of course that when he took up the crayon it was his moment of destiny. He was born with a restless, irresistible desire to understand the movement of life, and to reveal by some way

or another some corner of its secret. He took to the brush in the first place, not because of colour, but because of line. The naked was his goal. He saw a pronouncement, if not a verdict, in the curve of breast, hip, the play and counter-play of muscle and tendon, the Aphrodite lift of some female arm, or in the strict veracity of the lean flank of a boy.

Naturally he came to Paris. For in the seventies the best road for an English intellectual was the railroad to Dover and the Calais packet. The English will never cease to vacillate between unreasonable adulation of the foreigner and an unequally unreasonable refusal to recognise his existence. Nation after nation dawns on the astonished island-gaze and leaves them prone in the dust. In George Moore's day the French were Hellenes over whose polished lintels the English shamblingly ventured to intrude a barbarian foot. Appropriately it was at the *café* called the "Nouvelle Athénes" that Moore was admitted into the actual presence of the demigods.

But that was not, indeed by the laws of artistic rectitude could not have been, at once. The proper moment to receive the full impression was when the pupil-painter had convinced

himself with an anguish remaining one of the sincerest emotions of his life that painting was not for him. He has described his passage from studio to studio in search of a master, and his reception by Julien's, remarkable for the fact that Lewis Marshall was learning his trade there. We have already had a glimpse of Lewis in these pages. There is no need to give him further prominence, since his only use was to convict George Moore of his own failure as a painter. He is redeemed from being a suitable type to cast for a tenor part in the "La Bohème" only by the natural brutality which underlies his careless gaiety. The spurious romance of grisette and the square-bearded young painter, the serenade, the key flung from the attic window, and the glou-grous

"qu'ils sont doux  
a deux sous."

—all these George Moore is too strict a writer to admit. His amorous painter lives happily on his woman-friends' immoral earnings, and is only not a souteneur by profession because he doesn't possess the necessary concentration. And yet he can paint, yet he can write a waltz,

play Stradella, and talk the dawn in with theories upon art. Perhaps then we may forgive the Marshalls of the world, but on one condition—the one that George Moore imposed—that we do not sentimentalize them.

This disillusionment in friendship and art led George Moore to doubt his early adherence to the Pre-Impressionists. He had seen the work of the Impressionists and let off an uneasy squib or two as “*si j'avais un morceau de craie je mettrais celle-la dans un bocal.*” That particular phase is not without interest, because, though it is intended as a confession, it confesses more than the penitent guessed. George Moore has always been liable to the influence of his environment, and apt to reflect rather than to mould his world of the moment. Obviously a talent so essentially exploratory could never have remained loyal to the commonplace, and he would in any case have at some period rejected the seductions of the easy romantic in painting as in literature. But the moment of his conversion was in fact inspired not primarily by inward light but by the pleasure of sharing the movement at the “*Nouvelle Athènes.*” Admirable as his disquisitions on painting were, they are almost

as derivatively post-impressionist as his earlier criticisms were the echo of Julien's studio. It was only gradually, as he perfected his own art, that he began to fix his own principles for himself. He speaks somewhere of his progression from the sponge to the vertebrate—a drastic simile that I regard as far too picturesque for truth. He was never a sponge, because he was always selective in his absorption; but it is the fact that he eagerly soaked up what pleased and excited him. His genius consisted in its gradual transmutation into the stuff of his own thought and character. His period of gestation was unusually prolonged, but that must not be taken to mean that his ultimate achievement was not personal, or original. It was strikingly both, but no great artist ever took or needed such pains to discover his own strength. He says of himself that in life he would never learn anything correctly. That isn't true; he learned by an artistic self-discipline as harsh as the wearing of the hair shirt and the spiked cross to know himself. No other form of study is as arduous, and none more fruitful if carried to a successful conclusion.

It was while he was still waiting for audience of the heroes of the "Nouvelle

Athènes" that he met that M. Duval who was perhaps the first to mislead him into the paths that end at the theatre. M. Duval was the author of 160 plays, and had collaborated with half the names that dazzled the French stage. He would talk for hours on "le façon de M. Scribe de ménager la situation," and even while George Moore saw him as a gross fat little man doomed to write unactable plays, sitting in a room adorned by two spurious Angelica Kaufmanns, he was being seduced. How typical is the combination in him of a direct and therefore significant story-teller's interest in the man, and the almost furtive yielding to the temptation of the theatre. But how set about writing a play? In George Moore technique was necessarily the first consideration. He did not sit down with a blank sheet and a pencil, and write in a large hand—Act 1, Scene 1: "The drawing-room in a country house on the bank of the Seine." He did not conceive that a fierce undeniable impulse was the only justification for attempting any form of self-expression. That was never George Moore's way. He would not run before he could walk, and since the pace was to be deliberate he had all the time in the world to choose his goal. He may even, to use his own self-depreciatory

adjective, have thought it would be "jolly" to become a playwright. At least he could inquire into the matter and acquaint himself with the best models. Not Shakespeare for the odd reason that his name was in too popular use—odd and a little misleading. Shakespeare was never George Moore's man; he was too uncontrolled, too carelessly godlike a figure, and certainly had little enough affinity with the stagecraft of M. Scribe. Congreve, Wycherly, and Vanbrugh—the French school of English drama—were his study, and with their help he wrote a three-act play, "Worldliness," which, since it had Marshall and Alice Howard for its theme, must have had some interest. Not enough though to interest a manager, and, after a short sojourn in London, George Moore returned to Paris with an unacted play in his pocket to his true spiritual home in the "Nouvelle Athènes."

This was George Moore's University, and his revered and indeed beloved professors were the Impressionists whose names I have constantly mentioned. His first contact was an almost accidental one with Manet, who politely inquired whether the conversation of the café did not interfere with Moore's correction of his proofs. Like other young men before him,

I conceive that George Moore had been correcting proofs in order to be interrupted or at least to attract notice. He had the grace to admit it, and Manet, who was almost certainly not deceived, with, I suppose, a faint sigh of boredom, admitted the new admirer to the shrine. They were great days. The Impressionists were calmly convinced that they were the greatest living French painters, and, as being Frenchmen, therefore the greatest painters in the world, and as painters the greatest men. George Moore was far from disinclined to accept their own estimate of themselves. It was a delicious form of snobbery to frequent Olympus, and to look down at the mortals, particularly the British mortals. Perhaps he saw himself as Ganymede, and perhaps that was the way Renoir, Pissarro and the rest saw him, communicating their view to its object. Well! there are worse things than being cup-bearer to the gods of one's youthful dream. "*Puisque j'ai mis ma lèvre a ta coupe encore pleine,*" cried Hugo in one of the greatest love-poems ever written. To drink of Pharaoh's cup is hardly less an intoxication. George Moore drank with never a heel-tap.

And what was the effect of the draught?

To inspire Moore with an abiding passion for painting certainly, but that, though he does not confess it, was innate. To convince him also that he had a mission to interpret his masters to the Anglo-Saxon world, as he faithfully did. I have wondered what the New English Art Club made of his hot-gospelling for the French. Most painters, in my experience, are at once talkative and inarticulate. Perhaps because words are not their medium, they are easily intoxicated by their sound. They resent the intrusion of laymen into their sphere only less than they rage at their abstention. They assert that nobody but a chef can judge a dinner at the same time as they anxiously consult the taste of the most casual diner. It may, therefore, well be that John, Tonks, Steer, Sickert, Will Rothenstein and the rest welcomed the obedient pencil that said elegantly what they themselves expounded in a mixture of broken French and in a rather stunned English. Sickert—when he was still called Walter—taught in French presumably because his pupils would derive more information from what they couldn't understand. But, when he wished, he could and did write a plain nervous English, but which, unfortunately, was in general so combative that his activities were

only too often a polite version of "Hit me!" "You hit me!" George Moore stepped lightly into the ring, waving the amateurs on one side. "This," he said pensively connecting with his left to the Academic jaw, "is the way, I think." I expect that the New English Art Club agreed. At any rate, they never ceased making drawings of him.

But in fact it was from George Moore's point of view something much more important than an appreciation of French world-supremacy that he was acquiring. He learned from his masters what he had already guessed, that Art is not an interlude, but a martyrdom. The artist can have no divided loyalty; he must not be a young man with many possessions. He must give up all and follow the faith—and all must include not only hours of ease and the seductions of leisure, but even the friendship of one's own friends, and probably the love of one's lover. I think (though I am not sure) that somewhere George Moore records of one of his heroes that he went to the deathbed of his beloved. Death had caught her to him in a moment of agony. The master, between his sobs, found himself reflecting on the predominance of violet in the face of the dead. An abominable lesson, perhaps, but Art,

like religion, comes to bring not peace but a sword.

Unimportant, though to the young man of vital meaning, was his evaluation of the idea of a new art "based upon science in opposition to the art of the Old World that was based upon the imagination." As though Leonardo and Bacon had anything to learn from Manet and Sisly in that field, and as though art were ever anything but the translation of the object into the subjective—the everlasting conquest of matter by creative mind. That theory was therefore of much less moment than its emotional consequences. George Moore determined in literature to achieve what he regarded as the "philosophical" novel. Which means that he meant to write directly of what he saw, knew, and had experienced, the task that the first caveman who drew a mammoth with a flint on the wall of his cave attempted, and which the second caveman who copied the first man's mammoth shirked. Every great creative artist must recapture the thrill of the caveman, and every time that he succeeds he will assert that he has founded a new school of art. As he has; just as every crocus is the first and is unrepeatable. The painters forced George Moore to look at his mammoth

for himself: he has been doing it ever since.

He learned, too, that inexhaustible patience in microscopic detail which is perhaps more the merit of the great painter than the great writer. The picture is exposed nakedly to the gaze in one whole; one clumsy stroke of brush or pencil is as loud as an oath. The writer, on the other hand, can rely to some extent on the ability of the reader to forget. If modern journalism is founded on the prevalence of oblivion in the public, all writing has to some degree relied on that universal defect. But for George Moore every definite and indefinite article has been and is an article of faith. That, I think, is in part the gift to him of his acquaintance with the Impressionists.

It took him some considerable time, however, to realise exactly what was the nature of the bounty that he had received. M. Duval had inspired him with the idea of becoming a playwright, his next idea appears to have been that perhaps he was a poet. There are, I believe, two volumes of his poems extant, though I have never seen them. In "Confessions of a Young Man" there are a few examples both in English and French. I quote one verse:

“Fair were the beautiful days of old,  
When in the summer’s sleepy shade,  
Beneath the beeches in the wold,  
The shepherds lay and gently played  
Music to maidens, who afraid  
Drew all together rapturously,  
Their white soft hands like white leaves  
laid  
In the old dear days of Arcady.”

It is barely to be believed that George Moore should have written this—Edmund Gosse perhaps, or even Austin Dobson in a moment of aberration, but that cool hand ready to pounce on the first sign of sentiment and weakness, the unerring ear, and the almost preposterously wakeful eye, where were they all when this thing was being perpetrated?

The answer is, I suppose, that hand, ear and eye were not deceived. Verse, George Moore concluded, was no more for him than had been painting. What courage to attempt two of the most difficult arts of all, and what heroism to abandon both, and yet with a fresh unaltered heart attempt a third. The gods love those who help themselves. In the future

George Moore was to help himself with both hands at his own table, and the gods poured all the at last unforbidden fruits from their floral cornucopia.

### Chapter III. *Ireland*

A. E., says George Moore, complained of his portrait in "Hail and Farewell" that it made a schoolgirl's hero of him. I can't believe that this was his real grievance, even if he stated it so. I think that he must have been contrasting his own likeness with that drawn of Yeats, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, Horace Plunkett, and above all Gill. You haven't spared anything in them, A.E. might have said; indeed, you've given the drill the final twist on the inmost nerve. If you haven't been fair to them or even truly understood them, at least you've fiercely studied them. But you've left me vague and sentimentalised almost as though my portrait were an apology for the rest. It is not flattering either to them or to me. But, George Moore would reply, you've no faults; you don't steal, you aren't interested in women, you don't live for yourself. How can I draw you other than you are? But perhaps you think that I've made you seem something of

a bore, which, of course, you aren't. If that is so, accuse the writer but never the friend. It was unconsciously because of you that I came to Ireland, and it will be of you that I shall be thinking when I return to London, my mission uncompleted. Not really of me, Moore, but of the effect that I have had on you. But how else, A.E., can a writer think of anyone. And George Moore would walk back slowly to the gracious little house that A.E. had found for him, musing on the contradictions of Fate. No man has ever come closer to my spirit, he would reflect, not even Manet nor Balzac. I can't believe that Manet would not have liked my portrait of him and Rodin got far less of the Titan than I did. Why then does A.E. think that I've failed with him? Is it that affection dims the vision and enfeebles the hand, or is it that Ireland was never for me, and that therefore, however much I desired it, I couldn't appreciate the greatest Irishman of them all? And, if he had reached that point in his reflections, George Moore might have seen that he had all the time known that the story of "Hail and Farewell" must end so. He had come to Ireland not for what he could give but for what he could get. The artist was triumphantly rewarded in his

great trilogy but the man must have sorrowed a little. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," he might mutter angrily. "But that's nonsense!" Nonsense, no doubt, but nonsense that dried in his throat the words "Atque in perpetuum, mater, ave atque vale," as he turned his back on his ten years' pilgrimage, and that left him with the knowledge that he had lost something irretrievable. But, even so, he could console himself, like the Duchess of Malfi, by murmuring, "And still I am George Moore." But that would not be enough; it would just not be enough.

Though the Irish adventure is thus in a sense the tragic note in George Moore's life, unless he had had that experience he could never have written "The Brook Kerith." A writer cannot be entirely impersonal; unless he mixes in his own suffering he will be no longer a man but  $\eta\ \theta\epsilon\sigma\varsigma\ \eta\ \theta\hat{\eta}\rho$ . It was, therefore, some irresistible, if unconscious, need that drew him away from the memories of the Place Pigalle, from his art criticism, from his London friendships, from "Esther Waters" to Dublin and the Irish scene.

He has sought to explain his motive, but for once he has not fully understood himself.

No doubt loathing of the swashbuckling Boer War was the immediate occasion of the departure; equally the hope of being in at the birth of a new literature, and to have perhaps a controlling part in its shaping, must have had a rare attraction. But there was something else. The roots of his life were in Ireland. There was Moore Hall, there was the Colonel, his brother—and there was the memory of his father, whose unexpected death had given him the chance of Paris and the life of Art. A man may change the colour of his hair and of his skin, but he cannot change the colour of his blood. Sometime or another he will return to his origins, saying with a catch in his breath, as dear Robert Louis said, "Say! could that lad be I?" The lad could have been none other, George Moore; go back therefore and see if he can restore to you what nothing else in life can or will, the movement of the heart.

Ireland from the outset was a little shy of its new recruit. George Moore was convinced that a great literature could be re-created in the Gaelic, and the Leaguers believed equally that the soul of a people might be disentangled from the fossil remains of a neolithic tongue. If they had only looked across

the water to Wales they would have seen a Gaelic-speaking people happily content to forget the glories of Glendower and Arthur in exchange for the shipyards of the Bristol Channel. The Welsh have their singing and their Eisteddfod, and these redeem them from the dullness of an English provincial town. But the vague gods of the future excite them far less than the movements of the stock-markets. And still they have kept their language. But did George Moore and the Gaelic League care for that? They did not care. They might have asked a porter at Holyhead if his language did not make a man of him. He would have looked suspiciously through his dark eyes, suspecting a joke or perhaps a reluctance to give a generous tip, but the tip once received, he would, if he had spoken the truth, have replied that his brother had been promoted to Euston and forgotten his Welsh. And what good do I get out of it? he would ask. George Moore and the Gaelic League would never have listened, or if they had, they would have dismissed him as a soulless bore, unrepresentative of his people. And how inexpressibly wrong they would have been. For all lost languages are lost causes, but nobody, except a dolt, will do

other than feel a pang for the age-long triumph of hope over experience.

I know nothing of the complexities of Irish politics, but that, in writing this section of my booklet, is no disadvantage, because George Moore knew no more than me. He has in the affairs of public life, as opposed to art and to private experience, preserved an almost startling innocence. He has never himself sat at an office desk, has never had to face as acute a problem as that presented to a Post Office clerk asked to despatch a telegram to a non-existent address. He has lived with unusual intensity in every detail of the evenings and holidays of his Irish friends. But to their daily routine lives when managing an office or a newspaper or a Bank he has something of the attitude of an amused, tolerant and completely uninterested Victorian wife. "These men," he says, dusting a picture frame, "they must have something to occupy their days. Now what was it Degas said to the young man whose mother had gone to live with a priest?"

It was not surprising that men who regarded themselves as practical should have shrugged their shoulders at George Moore, and equally not surprising that he should have never under-

stood their re-action. Can it be, he was always asking himself, that they don't want me? They wanted him, of course, but he must have been a sort of perpetual standard by which they were measuring their achievements. What does he think of it all, they kept inquiring? He has come to us, deserting all else. It must mean much to him. Why then is he so dispassionate, so amused, so exploratory? One of two things—either he can't understand or aren't we after all as important as we think. They must have flocked round indignantly to A.E. Conceive, they would say, what George Moore said last night. He will call, they would say, the prophet Willie Yeats, and he will pretend that Yeats claims to be the Duke of Ormonde by right. Or he has said that Synge "with his large, impassioned face" is the gleeman that Yeats should have been—and poor Yeats, he says, has lost his flute irreparably. And as to Gill—it is perfectly unbelievable what he said of Gill—he calls him Pecuchet. It is, we are certain, a faintly obscene name and anyhow unsympathetic. What, they would say, are we to make of this George Moore? A.E. would grumble, I expect, in his Jehovah beard that Moore's burnt offering was as fragrant in his

nostrils as the herbs that Abel—the eternal peasant—shyly proffered. After all, he would say, we can do with condiments. George Moore is the unground pepper. By God, someone would groan, we'll grind him—the bloody Englishman. But he's not English, A.E. would maintain, only civilized. So is a circus horse, they'd reply, but would he leap at the fence? He would, A.E. would answer, and higher ones than you could ever see. But they wouldn't believe him, and they'd go away grumbling against the water-carrier whose skin contained a touch of iron or worse in the pale fluid. Chalybeate perhaps, but as Sam Weller said it tasted a little of damp flat-irons.

But whatever George Moore may have given or failed to give he was gathering with both hands like a boy set down among hazel nuts, in a year when every bush drooped under the weight. Dublin, like a wine of a great year, had bouquet; it must be savoured at leisure, rolled round the tongue, and gently digested with perhaps an evening light glinting through a glass held up to a high slim-shouldered window. There was first the matter of the rebirth of a nation; George Moore came to this with all the ardour of a

man to whom problems of parties and administration are virgin territory. His life had been spent in studios, in drawing-rooms, with men of letters and with men of fashion, as well as with his ladies and the gradual growth of his creative abilities. Now he was to share with the League, with A.E., Yeats and also all with Gill, power—that drug which while it may set the head spinning, inevitably slows the action of the heart.

George Moore denies that he is able to read methodically. Indeed, the third part of "Hail and Farewell" is represented as musings anxiously evoked to escape from the reading of "The Brothers Karamazov." It is, therefore, not inconceivable that all that I have hitherto copied or fancied could be fitted into an idle morning when, his Secretary being on holiday, he could not dive into the room at the end of the passage on the ground floor—the room, which Arnold Bennett might have said in his blunt way (as indeed he did say in another connection in "The Great Adventure"), smells of masterpieces. But these thoughts would not be for the morning. He would not, I imagine, reflect upon Ireland until after Clara had sent up an admirably-prepared piece of halibut followed by a chicken

with a bottle of a Bordeaux tempered with two fingers of hot water.

Perhaps Ernest Longworth might have sat with him for an hour or two before dinner, refusing to share it because of some other engagement but really guessing that his old friend wished to be alone with his thoughts. The curtains would be drawn, shutting out Ebury Street, which is quiet enough with only a few taxis grumbling and snorting past. Perhaps the noise of the taxis would bring back to his mind the clear ring of hoofs on stone, Alice Howard's ponies, hansom cabs in which he had ridden flower in button-hole with some other "masher" or with Tonks on the way to the Café Royal, and last of all the jaunting car in which he had driven not only to Moore Hall but to Stella's house, where he had walked among the flowers, and along the visionary streets of Dublin. He would sit, as he does, rather straight in his chair, his hands resting loosely on the arms. His eyes will be fixed perhaps on the landscape hanging opposite the window, but he will not be seeing it. He will be thinking so intently that you might say that all his body thought, so immobilized it is, and yet in spite of age and illness so taut. There is an alteration to be

made in "Aphrodite in Aulis" or perhaps the hexameters that he had written for "the Epitaph to the Dead Wolf" didn't altogether please him. Or it may be that he is exercised over some difficulty with the American publishers. All that, however, he gradually dismisses, and his eye lights on the empty chair opposite, ranging thence to the empty room. He peoples it gradually with his ardent and accurate memories. Jim Browne, born foolishly in Mayo in 1830 when he should have been born in Venice in 1660 a Van Dyk; Marshall, whom we know; the heroes of the "Nouvelle Athènes"; the horse-racing tobacconist; Julien's students; a score of ladies—till the room is so crowded that there is hardly space to think. But he knows that he has only conjured them up to avoid reading another book—not one written by a Russian master this time, but his own book, the one to which he will always come back, because in the end it is our failures that sit by us with quiet familiar face. He will return—I mean—to the contemplation of his years in Dublin.

He will begin and end with A.E. who trundled about Ireland on his bicycle urging co-operative farming as the solution of Ireland's trouble; A.E. who edited "The Home-

stead" because of his sense of duty, when he ought to have been painting his pictures and writing his poems; A.E. who would never accept a well-paid public appointment because he knew his writing could be cashed in no coin of terrene mint; A.E. to whom the young writers came for their introduction to the humanities; A.E. who alone did not discourage Moore when he stepped ashore and who perhaps alone regretted that Ireland had not been able to keep him. I have only heard of two instances when George Moore exposed himself to overwhelming physical exertion. The first was when he rode a long day of unflinching sun through the ravines near Jerusalem to find a cranny for the Essene monastery whither Jesus was to resort in "The Brook Kerith" after Joseph of Arimathea had nursed him back to life. The other is the bicycle excursion upon which he accompanied A.E. to some caves, where he hoped that he himself, and believed that A.E. might experience the spiritual transfiguration of vision. This particular expedition is described in dead earnestness. The long ride, the missed roads, the descent into the cave, and the inevitable appearance of two or three suspicious clergymen in whose company prophetic trances

were impossible. I am certain that George Moore was not meaning to ridicule the experience, nor were the clergymen introduced deliberately as comic relief. The thing I am convinced happened just so, but it seems to me, if it is seriously intended, an explanation of why in spite of his deep affection for A.E., George Moore derived less from him than from the others, and why perhaps A.E. complained gently of his portrait. It is possible to have visions, I suppose, even if you go out deliberately on a bicycle to look for them; it is credible that a shovel-hat may act as a solvent in the critical moment. But I doubt whether a man capable of that high and rare emotion, believed to be attainable by the fakir, would set about describing it with the cool, unswerving detail that is Moore's method, and I think it extremely unlikely that he would have exposed his fellow worshipper to the public gaze. No! there was something in A.E. that eluded George Moore, and for which he looked with an almost pathetic eagerness. What was the secret of the Blake-like pictures, the esoteric poems? George Moore had fiercely extracted the marrow from Balzac, from Impressionism, from the studio, the stable and the bedroom. Was there something

in life that he could not track down? It was a challenge that he could not refuse to accept. But what it was—whether priests or politics or merely some simple bond of daily human kindness—baffled him. He went with A.E. to share his vision, and he had to remain behind in the heat of the road. Afterwards he could only record the failure and the shovel-hats. A.E. was always going forward like that, and George Moore wondering and waiting. He never caught him up and perhaps that is why he made him his hero.

Here, if there had been time, I should like to have pondered on the strange intrusion of Indian mysticism upon the Celtic Renaissance—if that worn-out phrase may be used for want of a better. Yeats has been profoundly affected by it, and A.E. too has not resisted its temptation. How odd that the East should continue its ancient habit of subduing the mind of the West. Because in fact whatever contribution to a theory of conduct Indian mysticism may bring, it is simply not philosophy at all as the great Western metaphysician has understood it. It begins by begging all the questions, and ends by refusing all the answers. It is intellectually the place at which parallel lines are always meeting, and

where eternity becomes a quality of time. Nevertheless, it is strange, old and persuasive, and has no doubt its dark consolation particularly for minds, like those in Dublin, for whom the harsher epistemology of the West has produced industrialism and the British domination. But its interest here is that George Moore must have found in this one more surd in the Irish situation. Something in that situation was comic, in the Lever tradition, something highly exciting, with a sniff of the gunpowder of possible revolution, something was tragic with the sense of predestined failure—but one thing was flatly unintelligible to George Moore—the shadows in the margins of A.E.'s mind. These shadows were, I am sure, deepened by the silence from the East.

But it was not all silence in Dublin; far from it. It was a town, it seems, in which everybody wrote plays, and nearly everybody bad ones, except Synge, and his plays were cheerfully hooted down by the mob. Yeats wrote plays, Lady Gregory wrote plays, George Moore wrote plays, and even "dear Edward" wrote plays. Not the one with the broken anchor which couldn't be brought into the drawing-room, because owing to its size you couldn't wear it on your sleeve. That was

only projected and destroyed by criticism before birth. No! Edward Martyn, in his intervals of bargaining with the Archbishop about Palestrina, insisted on writing "A tale of the Town." It was, it seems, a good deal re-written by amiable friends, but it was even so quite hopeless. But then, as George Moore points out, Edward Martyn saw a striking likeness between Ibsen and Racine—because nobody was killed on the stage in the case of either dramatist. As to Synge he was Yeats's discovery—found in fact in the Rue d'Arsas. Because he was a winner, and had been a trifle pontifically spotted by Yeats, there was perhaps a slight disposition to regard him critically. Yeats had pulled him by the ears out of the studio from which he had sent round dull and apparently ill-written articles on French writers to the English press. Yeats packed him off to the tinkers to listen to the warm living speech of which the rhythms are the basis of all verse.

And here George Moore would, I think, be bound to wonder whether any speech except that which he hammers out of his own artistic consciousness can be of use to a writer. It's true that Synge from a fourth-rate and insignificant journalist became a playwright of

the first distinction. But that was only in part, and perhaps in small part, the gift of the language itself. The service that Yeats did for Synge was not so much to bid him study the tinkers' speech as to live with them, to return, that is, to himself in his own place with those native to him. Yeats, who made so great a pother of folk-speech, could never himself completely achieve it, and his triumphs were in his own dim rhythms that had never been in any speech or any song before. Lady Gregory too, who kept the Abbey Theatre going with a stream of elegant playlets learned no more Irish speech than is represented in a dozen phrases. And so, George Moore would be bound to reflect (for all this is his own reasoning), it was a false scent to look for a literature in a language. That would remind him of Hyde and Kuno Meyer who translated the genuine Irish literature, and he would see that it would have been as unreasonable to call on the younger generation to write in this tongue as to order the young Fascisti to compose in Latin. It is a thought that might have occurred to Mussolini and perhaps a few good Alcaics might have been turned. But not so would a people's literature be created. All those languages are so many Esperantos

with everything to commend them, except the daily rubbing of life, like the sea, upon words, shaping, swaying and spinning them till they have the lovely worn surface of shingle. A language is made by a million million mouths for ever repeating, stressing, using, fumbling through the centuries till meaningless sounds assume form, beauty, colour and significance, till the inorganic becomes organic, and these things, being dead, speak with more than mortal voice.

But even so if Moore had come to realise that to hunt for the soul of a people in a dead language was a hopeless quest, he would and does concede that in the creation of a folk-theatre Yeats brought Ireland into literature. Yeats in fact was equally right and wrong: he was supremely right when he went back to his own legend and his own people because there was the sap and the blood, and he was wrong when he believed that there was some talisman in their spoken word. The dumb aspiration of centuries was waiting for a voice; it was a matter of small importance what accent it assumed, provided that the long silence was interpreted. One after another the interpreters came forward—Yeats with a cadenced mythology that restored if not a re-

ligion at least a faith: James Stephens with "The Crock of Gold" that was true alchemy, changing leaden hearts into pure metal; A.E. with an Ireland that was all Deirdre—the Helen of the chaste green North; Lady Gregory, with the vivacious gossip of tavern and slum; Hyde and Kuno Meyer with their royal rendering of the songs of kings, and George Moore with "The Untilled Field."

George Moore himself attaches importance to that book. More than once he speaks of it as his part in the movement, and yet, like his bicycle-ride with A.E., it seems to be just this side of Ireland. Many of the stories are "pretty" in their melodic turn, but neither in language nor thought have they anything in common with what the others were attempting. I do not know what A.E., Yeats and the rest thought of them, but, however good they found them as tales, they must have felt that they were no more Irish than the Place Pigale. George Moore has succeeded in "The Brook Kerith" in transfixing the accent of Judea and procuratorial Rome, his Abelard is a miracle of insight into France of that strange period, and in "Aphrodite in Aulis" he has gone closer to the heart of the Athens of Pheidias than any scholar of them all. I do

not feel that in "The Untilled Field" he has done as much for the Irish peasant and the Irish priest. An Athenian might have recognised himself in the page of Aphrodite: I think that an Irishman would only have recognised George Moore in "The Untilled Field." And I should guess that they told him so. Perhaps the explanation is that for the first and only time in his life of an artist George Moore wrote with a purpose other than a purely literary one. Like the others of the group he was determined to show Ireland to itself and to the world. Propaganda and art have never agreed, and though a vigorous nationalism may and does inspire literature, the literature must not be controlled by patriotism. George Moore himself recognises this when he reflects that Synge began *Deirdre* in peasant-speech but wrote the second and third acts in a language suited to Courts and Kings, thus admitting that art permits no extraneous loyalties.

I expect that George Moore would, if pressed, go still further and accept the writing career of Yeats as proof of these contentions. He and his Dublin friends appear to have speculated as to why after thirty-five their great poet had apparently written himself out, why

at the age of thirty-seven he appeared to admit this tragic fact by issuing a collected edition of his work. Some not too amiable comments are recorded, it being suggested that all his best work was written when he was a poor boy at Sligo. His Muse, the cronies said to one another, was a colleen that after he came to London he had dressed up in tawdry splendour supplied by Arthur Symons, as though he had been a theatrical costumier for fallen Muses. Later they compared his style to a livery bought before the servant is engaged and it won't fit, and, added Gogerty, "It hangs in a press upstairs, becoming gradually moth eaten." Well, well! All writers have this trick of getting underneath one another's ribs, but only George Moore would have the courage to repeat the gesture in public.

They were wrong, of course, as wrong as Milton's contemporaries would have been if they had closed his singing chapter with "Lycidas." The two poets relapsed into silence for the same reason; each devoted a part of his middle years to the service of his country. Poetry is a jealous mistress and permits no other attentions even the most honourable. Milton was content to work for

the Protector and to let "Paradise Lost" and all the angels bide their time. Yeats was equally prepared to wait for "The Wild Swans at Coole" and "The Tower," devoting himself to a service it is true more literary than Milton's but no less alien to the demands of his own genius. He inspired the folk-theatre, and he is directly responsible for Lady Gregory and still more for "The Playboy of the Western World." Ireland will not forget these services, but literature will remember neither his tracts nor his political enthusiasms crowned in the end by a Senatorship, but only the slow ebb of his lovely cadence that is like the sound of a heart-beat heard between the surges of a softly withdrawing sea.

So George Moore would continue to dream by the fire in Ebury Street, and he would permit himself a small not unmalicious smile as he recalled some of Yeats's poses. He would think of him perhaps returned from a lecture tour in America, no longer the slim poet but a well-grown man with an immense fur over-coat, storming against the middle classes whose shillings had paid for the coat. Or he would see him "folding himself like a pelican" and dreaming of the disciples that

were to flock to him. That dream was after all accomplished, and Moore would therefore acknowledge that Yeats with A.E., even if they did not change one phrase in his own writing or inspire him with a single new literary motive of value, are as distinct and permanent in his mind as his beloved Frenchmen. However he may faintly twit Yeats or allow A.E. to grumble at him, these two are among his admirations, and the Ireland which gave him their companionship will seem very sweet in the firelight.

Very different but with the spice of great comedy are the shapes of Gill and Sir Horace Plunkett—the wickedly nicknamed Bouvard and Pecuchet. George Moore seeks in vain to preserve an attitude of respect for Plunkett. He has heard him spoken of on all hands as the saviour of Ireland, the A.E. of the great world. But alas! as he becomes progressively entangled with Gill and the Department for the creation of co-operative farming he declines into a figure more suitable for the Palais Royal than for a Public Office. I'm wronging his memory, the devoted man, Moore would think, and then the imp in him would remember the story of the asses. He laughs helplessly, of course, and knows that

he will never be able to resist it, and that he ought not, even if any sense of propriety held him back.

The only praiseworthy thing about Gill seems to have been that he had not written a play, but even this was probably untrue. He had been an ardent Nationalist, and had helped by his Nationalism to wring from the British Government the Public Department of Plunkett's dream. Could he consistently accept paid office under the hateful usurpers? He could, argued George Moore, and indeed he must. Not for the sake of his family, though that was a consideration well worth pondering. But because of the great service that his administrative ability would render Ireland. What would happen, Gill, if someone less gifted than you were selected and you threw away the god-sent opportunity? Confess that nobody else is thinkable. Gill, so we are led to suppose, confessed that he alone was thinkable, and with a sigh at the burdens that a sense of duty inspires in a fastidious mind like his own made the sacrifice of accepting £1,000 a year.

God knows what the real Gill did and why he did it, but Pecuchet certainly acted so urged by a Mephistophelian George Moore,

who privately thought that his Faust had no more administrative ability than a poached egg. But gradually Pecuchet forgot his earlier scruples in the heat of government. Pecuchet conceived the idea of converting peat into coal. Defeated by Nature's rooted objection to alchemy, he turned his attention to oyster-beds. Experiments in Galway showed that these creatures were perfect mayflies in their mortality—a curious and interesting fact, the young man charged with the domestication of the oyster found it. Is it drains perhaps? he was asked. He did not know, but the oysters were dismissed. Pecuchet persuaded Bouvard to consider first the increase of his own salary and then the improvement of the breed of asses in Ireland. Difficulty in improving poultry had been encountered, when the hide-bound stupidity of the peasant defeated the good work of the department, by writing letters containing most unhelpful observations such as "Sorra cock was among the cocks you sent us." (But how in spite of the Official Secrets Act did George Moore have access to the Departmental files? He can't possibly have invented the letter, can he? because in that case even the asses—perish the thought!)

But to return to our asses. It was decided, it seems, to import a large number of Egyptian sire-asses for no other purpose than to create a situation that Lever would have given a year of his life to imagine. All went well, and the comely animals chosen trotted alertly down to the ship, and thereafter for reasons of a strictly medical character, being donkeys, they just died. At the end of a long voyage one ass remained—forlorn, broken, a poor scarecrow of a donkey, who only bared his long teeth at the Irish mate suggested for him; that gloomed by day and brayed by night. Alas that a solitary donkey, braying by night in his unshared meadow, should be all that was left of the bright enthusiasm that founded the great revival of agriculture. No wonder that Plunkett-Bouvard promptly resigned, leaving Pecuchet to wonder who except himself could hope to succeed P-B. as Vice-President. And no wonder that when dreams and generous hopes changed to bitter laughter George Moore should begin to turn his eyes back to England —where there was no renaissance, but where at least the voice of Pecuchet's marooned donkey would not trouble the midnight air.

All this, George Moore might mutter half seriously, arose out of the cutting of Gill's

beard by the barber. From the day that he stood up, shaved à la Henri Quatre, he assumed the air of a master. From such small causes do the greatest events spring. But is the shape of a beard really a small cause? and George Moore would have to consider whether a certain secret malaise caused by Yeats's way of walking "like a rook," might not have dropped the subtle hint of poison in his mind that would never let him really give himself to Kathleen Na Houlihan. He had first seen Yeats walking about the back of the dress circle when "The Land of Heart's Desire" was being performed. He was wearing a long black coat drooping from the shoulders, a soft black sombrero on his head, a voluminous black tie flowing from his collar, loose black trousers dragging untidily over his long heavy feet. George Moore did not remember how all young men of genius like to distinguish themselves by their clothes. He didn't remember himself returning to Ireland a "magnificent Montmartrian" with a great blond beard, enormous trousers and a hat so small that his sister constantly mistook it for her own. He merely was conscious of an alien eccentricity, the only thing we can never forgive, while all the time we are hug-

ging one of our own no less startling and no less odious to the unsympathetic. But that first impression never wholly died, and, though Moore freely admits the greatness of Yeats as a poet, there is always that touch of personal distemper which made it impossible for him ever to hold the torch in a resolute hand and which must have made the collaboration in "Diarmuid and Grania" a scene that, if George Moore could really have envisaged it, would have been one of his triumphs.

George Moore says that it was Yeats that first drew him to Ireland, and that the very beginning of the train was an almost chance suggestion of Edward's, when he lived with him in the Temple, that art was winging westward. But I don't think that he's right. These two may have been the occasion but A.E. was the secret, if unguessed, cause, and it was A.E. that kept him there. And such was A.E.'s influence that he might actually have done for Moore what Yeats did for Synge, if it hadn't been first that the genius of Moore is far harder and more unmanageable than that of the author of "Riders to the Sea," and secondly there were the priests.

It is a curious thing that Roman Catholicism

did not profoundly worry Moore while he was in France. He would even speculate agreeably on Dujardin's reaction to it, and somewhere, I think, in "The Confessions" he is still found saying or at least not rebutting the theory that no great art has ever flourished under Protestantism—an opinion which he lived violently to reject. But, he would no doubt say, they wore their religion very lightly in the studio. They might not overtly deny their adhesion to the Church, but they were in fact magnificently pagan. They would have nothing to do with "the soft Jewish schism called Christianity." At least, he would be entitled to explain, whatever they may have thought or practised in general, they saw to it that Art was not priest-ridden. Imagine the Archbishop of Paris demanding the suppression of a Manet! They would have burned Notre Dame, as once they burned the Bastille.

But in Ireland all that was different. Already in "A Drama in Muslin" he had so handled the church and the incumbent at Gort that the priest had declared, so said Edward, that he would pour dirty water on Moore if ever he came back there. But all the time that George Moore was claiming the

right of his soul to be pagan, there were influences at work in him that he would not rightly understand. His return to Ireland was accompanied by a spiritual excitement that almost took the form of a vision, and once looking earnestly at the glass he wondered what might be moving behind the familiar mask. Surely not Christianity?

Surely not. For the first thing that he encountered in Dublin when he went back with Yeats and Edward to produce "The Countess Cathleen" was a violent Catholic outbreak against the play. It was necessary to take the opinion of the priests as to its orthodoxy, and Cardinal Logue denounced it on extracts without ever having read the play. His fear, justified by the event, was that Edward—who was financing the play—would let that part of his person he called "the soul" be troubled. As it was. For Edward was first and last a Catholic, and cared more for the playing of Palestrina in the Cathedral than for the success of his play "The Heather Field" or even for the Irish Renaissance. Yes, Catholicism in Ireland was a force that stood, so it seemed to Moore, for shackles and darkness.

Nor was it only with the "Countess Cathleen" that there were difficulties with the

priest. They were as potent in Dublin as in the bog. Did not Father Maguire in "The Untilled Field" drive back James Bryden to the job in the Bowery slum only because he would not permit a reasonable gaiety, "I've heard of your goings on," he said, "of your beer-drinking and dancing. I'll not have it in my parish. If you want that kind of thing you had better go to America." He experimented a little with Father Tom Finlay, a priest with a finger in every pie; he liked him so well going bicycle rides and walks with him, that A.E. even feared that the priest was angling for Moore's soul. But he need not have feared; George Moore was only adding a further character to his cast—the benevolent powerful priest who will even let people be happy—provided that they are happy in the way that he dictates. Didn't he encourage them to dance in Donegal when he was there on holiday? But only in his presence, and a poor thin sport for young blood it would be, Moore reflected, with the eye of the priest on them the whole time.

He would have in mind, too, his unhappy experiences with the priests at Escott—the Catholic seminary at which he spent a troubled time, being taken away not only at his own

wish but at that of the priests. Always it seemed to him that when he met the black cloth it was a pall stifling the freedom of the soul. For a long time he concluded that he had no religion, except devotion to art and he would to-day still recite—if he didn't dislike Shaw's work so much—the dying artist's creed in "The Doctor's Dilemma." He had toyed a little with Indian mysticism, and had not been altogether unmoved by Yeats's Brahminical mind. He was attracted also by "Ætheism"—a strange Blake-like form of Pythagoreanism. He accepted none of them; but for a man who disclaimed all religion he was oddly preoccupied by it. It is no surprise then that he should have by degrees developed a strong bias for Protestantism. No doubt he would still disclaim all weakness for the soft Jewish schism, but he might already have been feeling out to Paul, whom I believe Moore to admire as much as any man in the world's history. He could not, of course, forbear teasing "dear Edward" on the score of his Catholicism, and this led to Edward's crying angrily that if he were a Protestant he had better declare for one.

What then? George Moore would say, looking at the fire and wondering if it were

not time to clamber up the long flights of stairs to his bedroom. There were only solitary evenings now, he would feel. There was no Edward either in the Temple or to be knocked up to the accompaniment of the phrase from "The Ring." Arthur Symons, who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll, would not drift in with his wealth of vague phrases. Worst of all there was no A.E.

"They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead," he might murmur, thinking of all the nights when that strangely assorted pair had ushered in the dawn with happy earnest talk. He would remember how years ago he had described to a very beautiful lady—Mary—the perfect companion that he sought. He must be a man between thirty-five and forty, not tied by women. He must be ready to talk on the arts till the small hours of the morning, and with his intelligence have the manners and appearance of a gentleman. He must be able to illuminate conversation with sudden unexpected sallies, and in every art (to revert to one of George Moore's favourite and oft-used similes) he must be able "to distinguish between washtubs and vases." Never, George Moore would reflect, did I find him, neither with A.E. who stood for every-

thing—the eternal “yes,” nor John Eglinton who stood for Nothing, the eternal “no.” Nor with “dear Edward” that unfinished sketch of a man, much less with Yeats who cawed too gently for his friend’s astringent taste. Nor with the colossal Jim Browne—his distant cousin—the painter and lover of huge blondes, nor even at the very beginning with Marshall. It is too late now, he would conclude, to hope for anything. Gosse has gone with his pretty knowledge of literature, a sort of spinster Muse, joining in their dances like an old maid with mittens, but keeping time almost too perfectly. There is, of course, Tonks, and one or two of the newcomers have at least interested me—de la Mare talked sweetly enough of the poetry that he can so well turn. But no! there’s no one now.

But if there had been, I could have renewed the debates that I had first with Edward and then with the Colonel, in which I tried to demonstrate that no great art had ever been produced by a Roman Catholic. That the thesis is wholly untenable in fact would not distract George Moore. If his opponent brought up fifty names of great Catholic painters, poets or writers, he would reply that they did not compose as Catholics. He

would not allow Villon, though the little wretch was most ardently a Catholic in his blasphemous thieving way. He would dismiss the Italians because nobody could be a true Catholic in all that sunshine. But what matters the truth or the untruth of the thing? It is the growing disturbance that its gradual development induced which Moore would wish to discuss with his imaginary Heracleitus.

We must choose, he would recall himself saying to Kuno Meyer, between literature and dogma. He urged his theory on the Professor who neither agreed nor dissented but gave him a list of the greatest German writers, all Protestants except Heine and he a convert. But what was more to the point, he told Moore how he had come upon a thirteenth century poem called "God's Grandfather" written by a monk who had left the monastery as being too noisy, to compose in the wilderness. A charming poem of a simple piety and written by a Catholic—a fact which curiously confirmed George Moore in his doctrine.

Spurred by this discovery he summoned the Colonel to Dublin to impart it. Moore would remember with gusto (and how he would love to share the scene with his boon-companion) the Colonel in boots and riding breeches

crying furiously "You don't mean to tell me that you've brought me all the way from Mayo to argue with you about religion and I in the middle of a most important piece of work?" He enjoys the memory too much not to put the question "what was the work?" only to learn that it was clearing the stone park. The Colonel must be allowed to talk himself back into a good humour, and it will only be at and after dinner that the brothers will resume the debate. For a time the Colonel will be able to treat the thing dispassionately, arguing the Catholic case with no little conviction and adroitness. It wasn't till the name of Cardinal Newman was mentioned that the Colonel became uneasy. For his brother was most violent in his denunciation of that lay figure as "a sort of ragged weed which withered on till it was ninety." A perfect instance and example of George Moore's theory, so he said. For Newman was all his life replete with a savage obedience to authority, and it was exactly the numbing force of dogma that dictated his "broken English." Well might the Colonel interrupt "broken English." But George Moore had given his theory its head, and it now began to appear that he was thinking of

the evils in which Catholic education involved the young.

It was at this moment, George Moore would reflect, that I said Good-bye to Ireland. For you see, dear Heracleitus, the Colonel knew that I was thinking of his boys, who were being brought up Catholics. He could hardly frame the dark suspicion that I would wish to tamper with their faith. But I did, and I let him see it. From that day there would be no more real understanding between us, and no more home for me in Ireland. It was later, of course, when I went down to Mayo, and bade him let me have one of the boys to bring up in the Protestant faith, suggesting that only on that understanding would I support him. I hadn't believed that it was possible for me to be as affected as I was by the stroke in reply, which was that I had been paying money all these years to have him educated by the Jesuits. It was a strange dark wound that glowed abominably all night and the next day, and my hurt was no less than the Colonel's. There was nothing to be done, I saw. He could pay me back the money and little use it would be to me. The evil was done and I with my pounds had been directly responsible for it. There was noth-

ing to do, Heracleitus, but to pack up and go. But even as I sat in the train, with the Colonel walking gloomily on the platform in the rain, I was thinking "Catholics and Protestants don't mix; we are never comfortable in their society. We tell them by a foolish ecstasy, a foolishness in their faces difficult to define, but——" The whistle blew and "The Colonel passed out of my sight. So this is the end of it all and there was no help for it."

No story that was ever composed was truer to the melodic line. The Montmartrian, the Pagan, the lover of freedom, gaiety and laughter, leaving Moore Hall, his youth and Ireland for the sake of the religion of those persecuting dissenters Calvin, Luther and Wycliffe. If George Moore had only once seen the Garden of the Reformation at Geneva with those flattened portentous figures, pushing back the weight of the Treille with their gaunt unamiable shoulders! Narrow, cold, inhuman, they frown down the loveliness of the Jura in their face. This is the Protestantism for which George Moore sacrificed all that.

But it did not matter in the end. Let Calvin dabble his enormous feet in the little

fresher below him, and outstare the beauty of the natural world, he had done one greater thing "than all the worthies did." He had sent back George Moore to England and inspired him with the religious excitement that led him to write "*The Book Kerith*"—the greatest single literary achievement of our time, and possibly the greatest prose book, except the Bible, in the English tongue.

## Chapter IV. *Criticism*

YOU will perhaps be saying now that even for George Moore it would be difficult to pack all this into one day. I shall have no right to complain if you do advance that criticism, and indeed I shall not pretend that in any single day George Moore would in fact, like the fabled drowning man, have been able to see the whole of his life in a flash. I shall merely shield myself behind the fashionable literary artifice of the moment, urging, as I understand James Joyce to urge, that everything happens to a man in a period of twenty-four hours. Indeed, though I have never gathered the time-scheme of "Ulysses," I am told that it conforms to at least one of the Unities. If therefore it is permitted to James Joyce to devote half a million or so words to a single day, shall I be hanged for looking over a wall?

Possibly, but I don't think that I shall very much care. All that has been written here would have been compressed into three hours'

conversation and I wouldn't slight Moore by admitting that to be the span of his insatiable curiosity about life, letters and himself. Besides you are to remember—if you are such a precisian—his way of life. He doesn't now frequent the great world that would perhaps accord him the place reserved only for Bernard Shaw and any insignificant foreign man of letters who condescends to stir the dust of these barbarian and pliant shores. He has sedulously represented himself as a dandy, a lover of food and women, an unabashed frequenter of low taverns and resorts of the abrupt and vulgar. That may have been so, and he may conceivably have been such. But even then I know, as if an angel had spoken it in my ear, that he took with him everywhere George Moore—the saint and monk of letters. He complains somewhere of a woman, who was cold, because she was always a spectator of her own lovemaking—an odd complaint from one who, from the beginning, had been an unremitting, savage, and not always benevolent student of his own soul and his own actions. Even if he committed a tithe of the escapades to which he lays claim (in "*Memoirs of my Dead Life*" are some 200 pages devoted to descriptions of successive

affairs of the heart) the impulse to understand was always as strong as the impulse to act. If not, how would he have recorded in the idyll of the Lovers of Orelay the incident of the missing pyjamas and the silk night-shirt. "Was ever woman in this fashion wooed? Was ever woman in this fashion won?" wonders George Meredith in "Richard Feverel." Yes, says the consenting soul of the reader, since Richard was unconscious of his own plight. But George Moore would have us believe that in order to consummate his dream he drew the whole sleepy town of Orelay for the pyjamas that his absent-minded man had forgotten to pack, and had to content himself with a silk night-shirt. He even considered, he suggests, that in order to complete the costume he must purchase a night-cap, and was only deterred by the dismay that the threat occasioned in his lady's bosom. He was watching himself, of course, possibly instinctively, perhaps also with a view to "copy." And who will say that an artist is not entitled to be his own model. Except that "The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" is always a portrait that the original would have repudiated either because it sentimentalized or deformed him. But that would not trouble

George Moore. He could not love himself so much, loved he not writing more.

Now in the twilight of his thought he is all writer and actor not at all. There are mornings in the back-room, at the end of the ground floor passage where he works indefatigably with Miss Kingdon. There he may taste his ancient joy in re-shaping the proofs to the great exasperation of publisher and printer, polishing, filing, changing, and, unlike Yeats, nearly always improving in the process. Or he may be wandering in Periclean Athens, happily deliberating on the production of a play by Euripides. How he would like to have had a finger in that pie! Did he not in face of all the protests of Edward and Yeats convert the mob of amateur Thespians cast for "The Countess Cathleen" into a company!—no fault of his that religious prejudice hissed it off the stage. He might have been able to make a suggestion to the Athenian Manager, at least arguing with him that the fishmonger's son was too handsome for a messenger and too great a donkey for a king. He couldn't re-write "Orestes" as he wrote and adapted Edward's "Tale of a Town" into "The Bending of the Bough." But he would approach it as familiarly as

though he had just walked down from the Acropolis with the great playwright, asking him if he were sure that he was not obscured by undue reverence. The gods, he might say, do not change from century to century; we must be careful how far we submit to them. Or he may be back in the austere company of Paul, seeking once again to make a drama of the meeting with Jesus, that restless longing to re-dramatize the greatest drama of all still possessing him. Or he may be recomposing his Viennese admirer's letters, or making the final re-orchestration of "The Brook Kerith."

That is for the mornings. There is most of the rest of the day in which to remember, to recompose, and to indulge in his highest happiness—the imaginary conversations which Walter Savage Landor never surpassed in subtlety and nervous vigour. He will not read much, having always regarded himself as a butterfly rather than a bee with books. He has neither the time nor the inclination now to return to the French loves of his youth, nor systematically to explore the Russians. He cannot persuade himself to read much or deeply in the younger literature. Occasionally he comes on a sentence with a pretty turn

in an article by Charles Morgan, or he may with a certain happy surprise find native force and heat in something of Sheila Kaye Smith's. But for the most part he cannot bring himself to plunge into the many books that are sent to him by aspirant authors. Now and again he proffers advice, nearly always neglected, as when he told Austin Clarke to explain the agonies of his legendary king possessed of an insatiable appetite by crediting him with possession of a tape-worm. But on the whole the writers of the present day are not for him. He does not, like Arnold Bennett, need to subdue some lurking self-criticism by a weekly man-of-the-world chat on the literary fashions of the moment. He does not greatly care for the intelligentsia of the day, and he is indifferent both to their applause and sneers. He does not, I am sure, know what dissatisfied young men in Dublin think of him, nor would he wish to convince them of a bustling, up-to-date knowledge of all that is going on. He is concerned with an older mode, and a more enduring fashion. When he had been dangerously ill, the journalists came to him in the Nursing Home in Portland Place for an oracle. A dim but most determined voice asserted that there were no writers extant.

Bernard Shaw, perhaps, they murmured; but fortunately he did not hear.

No, he has all the time to remember, refashion and record, so that there is room for all that is written here in a day of his life. He will inevitably consider books from two points of view, first absolutely, and then for their effect on himself. No man ever set himself more deliberately to fashion his own genius. He started like the stammering Demosthenes, walking on the seashore with pebbles in his mouth to cure his impediment. He was no less sure than the great orator of his future but as fiercely aware of the need of discipline. Did he not teach himself a style by the most dangerous expedient of all—attempting two arts, painting and poetry, either of which might have enthralled and destroyed him. His method was, of course, never Stevenson's who loved to play “the sedulous ape,” so much so that his delicious writing is more of a pot-pourri than a style. It carries with it a thousand fragrant hints of dead summers and dead roses. George Moore of course, knew Stevenson; indeed writing of him in the “Confessions” as Mr. Stevenson. Curiously young-mannish and superficial is the criticism which speaks of his style as “over-

smart, well-dressed, shall I say, like a young man walking in the Burlington Arcade?" Surely that was written by another young man walking in that dreary glass purlieu, put a little out of conceit with himself by the appearance of a slightly better dressed stranger. Truer and more mellow is the judgment expressed in the preface to the "Celibate Lives" where Moore recognises the gracious charm of the "Travels with a Donkey," while suggesting that Stevenson was not a story-teller in the sense that Balzac was—one for whom life flowered inevitably into shape upon the page. Even so it is curious that he should have ignored the poet Stevenson. Prof. Garrod of Oxford—no mean critic—has contended half seriously that R.L.S. is the most considerable influence of later poets. It may be so; certainly he wrote in the poem of the whaups crying about the graves of martyrs "my heart remembers how" one of the poems of his period certain to survive, and then lines and lines that sing like the fiddle. But Moore would in any case have had no appreciation of his muse, because from the outset he paid poetry the compliment of expecting from it the impossible. Something must be attributed here to the influence of

the Symbolists and Symbol. He claims himself indeed to be one of those who sought to paint in verse rather than to write in it. But words will only serve the function for which they are designed, and the "anderstreben" from one art to another of which Pater wrote can only confuse. Mallarmé, therefore, mentioned by Moore as one of the first of the poets is hardly a poet at all, and to have thought that Yeats would end by being a confused Mallarmé—an obiter dictum—was like suggesting that a nightingale might if it insisted on its low single cadence wake up one morning to find itself a cuckoo. The Symbolists when they succeeded—and mightily they did succeed—triumphed by giving words their way, and not by imposing upon them a shape from without—some symbol of the broken anchor kind that Edward wished to drag into his play. But a genius so sensitive and so deliberately developing as Moore's could not be wholly misled about verse. His references to Shakespeare are ambiguous. He would, I think, have us believe that for pure poetry he prefers Marlowe. That may well be because he read Christopher when he was young, and came to Shakespeare later, seeking rather for the playwright than the poet. He

speaks of "the wondrous summer of Shakespeare" but he quotes:

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships

And burnt the topless towers of Ilion?"

Yet I cannot but think that he who had the passion for the single line, who half seriously dallied with some Montmartrian absurdity that every poem should be one line only, who would have crowned de Vigny as a poet for the single line:

"Dieu que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois,"

would have been dominated and pervaded by Shakespeare if he had but come to him in the right time.

"Put up your bright swords for the dew shall rust them"

—there is no inevitable line, but what poet of them all ever wrote such another and William has a thousand such?

But perhaps the real difficulty with Shakespeare was that he was romantic in the sense that he touched nothing which he did not impress with his own gold. A Midas magnificence—Moore might murmur—and apply the same criticism to Hugo, for whom he never had a real sympathy. Indeed inexplicably in the essay “A visit to Médan” he writes, “Hugo is said to be the last of the old-world poets: but the real difference between Zola and Hugo is that one can and the other cannot write verse.” The dictum is so wild that he must have set down the names in the wrong order, and in the next sentence he admits Hugo’s genius for versification. Nevertheless, he was easily wearied by the overwhelming Frenchman. There is, in effect, too much of him: he not only piles Pelion upon Ossa, but builds a Coliseum on the top of both and then runs up a flag! Yet Hugo has not only individual lines of crashing splendour (too crashing, thinks Moore) but whole poems that sweep up and on like tides as irresistible as those drawn by the long angle of the moon. Far removed indeed from de Villiers’ half serious contention (that I spoke of above) in favour of the single line:

“O pasteur, Hesperus a l’occident s’allume,” as far removed as the Atlantic Ocean from a trout-stream, and far removed too from “the pale spiritual” Symbolists who were waiting their turn. But none the less great poetry, and as George Moore admits the first that broke the silence that had brooded for centuries over French verse.

George Moore might perhaps admit some of this as he looks back with the battle of symbolism and naturalism won so far as he is concerned. He freely concedes that Hugo invented rhyme, even if de Banville broke up the couplet. He might say to himself that some of these expressions were battle-cries emitted in the heat of the combat. Victor Hugo was a mountain blocking all progress for the younger men, and if he wouldn’t come to them, well, they would not fail to come to him and with Mahomet-like vigour blast him out of the way. There is room, he would surely think, for the smaller, delicate uplands as well as for Mont Blanc. We shall gain little or nothing by pretending that these 15,000 odd feet of granite do not tower to the sky. But even so mere size is not all. We’ll not be daunted by any elephantiasis of

the soul. And then he will come to the period of verse in which he is at home, because it has his own meticulous felicity, only not smelling of the lamp because the oil was distilled of some rare and gracious herb. He came to Theophile Gautier as to a wedding under the sky of the South between wit and freedom. Here was the proof for which George Moore sought that "the correction of form is the highest ideal." A dangerous ideal if it means, as it never meant with Gautier and does not mean with Moore, the elimination of the substance. George Moore speaks of Gautier and Balzac as his masters, and each gave him something distinct and permanent. In Gautier he found not only support for those anti-Christian theories, which were of minor importance, but that self-effacing mastery that would, like a Chinese carver, die rather than leave the last vein of the last petal uncut. Filigree is a bad image because it suggests something slight and a little fretful. It is rather the Benvenuto Cellini fingers that he saw—the long, subtle and cool magicians that groped unceasingly till they found and transfixed the melodic line. Supremely so in "La Symphonie en blanc majeur" (rightly beloved of Moore) did

Gautier work. And George Moore never forgot that lesson. If he lived for a thousand years, he cries, the power of Gautier's work would remain unshaken in his soul. That cry too he might now discount a little, uttered as it was still in the heat of young discipleship. Yet it has truth in it, he would reflect, and I would never have seen Jesus on the Cross if Gautier hadn't burned the crucifix for me first and made a place for me where on a new Calvary I would build my own in sweat and patience, in hope and with the long aspiration of the craftsman's heart rejecting all but the one beloved object. Nor need we wonder that in turn Baudelaire and Verlaine were his adorations rather than Le Comte de Lisle, Mendés, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, or even de Banville. His likings in the matter of poetry are instinctive; they are not wholly dictated by literary considerations, or were not, till he attempted to elaborate with John Freeman and Walter de la Mare his theory of pure poetry (which was what I meant when I said that George Moore asked the impossible of verse). He would, of course, have found it difficult to resist such an individual verse in de Lisle as:

“ Il régne, il végète  
Effrayant Zéro,  
Sur lui se projette  
L’ombre du bourreau.”

Naturally in the full flush of that elaborately seductive “ effrayant Zéro ” he recalls the man who would have put both his real feet on zero, crying that it only terrified the coward. Victor Hugo—how unlike the home life of this abominable king—ah yes, the net result of Hugo’s ambition is that nobody ever reads him, except when the journalists quote him in the newspaper, in which Hugo is luckier than Edmund Spenser, because the journalists never quote “ The Faerie Queen.” And how could he altogether resist Villiers with his

“ Pepin le bref est mort depuis onze cent  
ans

Moral :

Quand on est mort c’est pour long-  
temps.”

But these were rather the condiments of the period than the mendacious nourishment that a feverish spirit demanded. George  
8

Moore must wonder what was the nature of the arrogant poison breathed out by Baudelaire's "Flowers of Evil." For beautiful in unholy decay they seemed then, and encouraging to all that was *fin de siècle* and *Yellow Book* in the world. But why, George Moore may well ask himself, did we speak of their "deadly delight" and let ourselves be seduced into rhapsodizing on the beautiful evil fruit of rank Parisian gardens? Why did we ignore the noble simplicity of the form, the classic severity of the line? Will not George Moore admit that he was right to salute Baudelaire but that he saluted him for a wholly wrong reason. He enthroned him, in accord with the theory of the period, in Hell, when all the time there was a marble chair waiting its occupant on some cool height of Olympus. It was, moreover, the non-literary appeal, the sense of justified wickedness, that drew him. Any work of Art, said Oscar Wilde, is wholly useless, and if it can be immoral as well, the young Moore added, it is doubly a work of art. And it was because George Moore was always deeply concerned with moral questions, and precisely because he wouldn't admit it to himself, that he loved the rebel in Baudelaire and Verlaine,

and found the poet almost by happy accident. Not so did he pass judgment in prose, as will immediately appear, and still less in painting. But poetry in some way intoxicated his sense of right and wrong:

“Libitina thy mother, Priapus,  
thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.”

Swinburne forgot, and George Moore forgot, that the Greeks were amoral but never immoral. If Baudelaire’s flowers had really been blossoms of decay they would have been thrown away in disgust, and certainly if Pheidias had been asked to model “Our Lady of Pain” he would have asked to be blindfolded. In the heat of youth and artistic fervour truisms like these escape us, and it is right that they should. But George Moore, guided by an inexorable sense of line, found his Baudelaire, and it doesn’t matter at all now that he crowned him with somebody else’s wreath of sorrel.

George Moore claims that there is no English sonnet that lingers in the ear like Verlaine’s:

“Parsifal a vaincu les filles, leur gentil  
Babil, et le luxure amusante et sa pente  
Vers la chair de garcon vierge que cela tente  
L’aimer des senses légers et ce gentil  
babil”—

a stalwart claim to make with all Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, to say nothing of the Elizabethan sonneteers. He can't really mean that. Perhaps he discussed it with Edmund Gosse, who would have walked over the lines leaving his little bird-prints on them like those of sparrows in snow. I doubt whether he would have convinced Gosse, and I can't believe that if he would read over to himself:

“Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediment”—

that he would for an instant remain of that opinion. But his attraction to Verlaine had the same spell in it as that to Baudelaire. He was a hideous, almost lunatic-domed little rhymer who defied the lightnings like Ajax, and really seemed to have the better of the Celestial conflict. Max Beerbohm once drew a picture of Verlaine leading out a file of

pupils along the Brighton front—an irresistible contrast—the shabby sour little usher and the forces of the world against which he was arrayed. Irresistible, and nobody of the period is to be blamed for falling. Yet it is of first-rate interest as showing that even flawless literary integrity such as George Moore's can suffer estrangement by a real emotion. "Up the rebels" he was crying as heartily as any victim of 1916 or after, but like them he saw and found something beyond the mere act of rebellion.

I once asked George Moore how far de la Mare and Freeman could fairly be held responsible for some of the opinions put in their mouths in "*Conversations in Ebury Street*." Allowing for the necessary adaption to the form of dialogue, he replied, they are reasonably accurate. I've never asked de la Mare, and alas! it won't be possible to ask that or anything else of Freeman now. I would have liked to ask them because I find it difficult to believe that two such poets could have acquiesced in a theory which seeks to judge the poetry of all ages by one standard, that of pure objectivity, and even then a standard that seems to me incapable of exact

definition. For what is the purely objective in art? Is it Manet or Gauguin who has achieved objectivity in painting, and, if so, is there no Manet or Gauguin signature to their works? Is it James Joyce or Virginia Woolf of the moderns who have most completely dispossessed their own soul and written the novel of detachment? And in contemporary verse is it Mr. T. S. Eliot or Mr. E. E. Cummings who has most surely realised the ideal? And if it is the ideal, are we not moving to a theory of anonymity in art—a theory advanced on proletarian grounds by some of the younger Russians or on grounds of pure metaphysics by some of the Transitionists in Paris? Is there no risk, if we press it far enough, of reaching the ideal of poor Enoch Soames, who wished his poems to be nameless? But how, Max Beerholm makes Will Rothenstein inquire, are we to get the book in the shop. "We can't very well say I want blank by Mark Soames." And are we entitled to ask of poetry the opposite of that—that it shall be a "poem" by Blank.

George Moore speaks somewhere of Yeats's brilliant dialectic methods. He remembers his parry and thrust at "The Cheshire Cheese" when he first met him there, and how relieved

he was that the argument dropped before he was finally discomfited. He wouldn't, I fear, be much concerned by my attack, or regard me as a dexterous fencer for making it. The *reductio ad absurdum*, he would say, is a bludgeon past which any rapier can slip. Pure poetry is the most personal of all in that it represents the yielding of the poet to his material, and his resurrection in it. The canon is admittedly a strict one, excluding great tracts of admirable verse. But what is admitted is adamantine, and shines the cleaner for the attrition of time. But is the poet then alone of all artists to create externally, and is his ultimate success to be determined by the degree that he becomes marmoreal? Can you apply a similar and single rule to any other art through the Ages? And would you not admit that what was right with Titian might and would have been wrong with Rubens, that though Michel Angelo would have understood Manet he would have been mad to attempt to paint like him and Manet crazy to copy the Italian. Why then is the poet of 1930 to submit to the same rule as dominated Meleager? But there is one rule through the ages for the painter—to see and set down for himself, he would reply. Painting has its objectivity

defined for it by the material: I ask no more of the poet. But you do. You do not ask that the painter should make cadences with the brush, but you do ask that the poet should paint with the pen. Aren't you seeking to make your poet a follower of the *Nouvelle Athènes*? I ask no more of him, George Moore would reply, than I asked of myself in prose, to follow the material and not to distort it. Because you have always written with a brush, I answer, you must not forbid others the use of the less fastidious pencil. But have I worked with the brush, he would ask, at last interested because to my halting argument on æsthetic has succeeded a question on his own work. Let us consider that. And so at last let us turn from what is no more than the resuscitation of Hume's theory of the Association of Ideas, exploded by the good old Kant, to George Moore's own method of work. Perhaps, George Moore might add, not without a trace of justified malice, it would do no harm to touch on that somewhere in the course of your booklet. But, I should reply aghast, you told me to eschew literary criticism and consider the man. And now, my dear Humbert Wolfe, you had better digest my

little joke quietly lest it interfere with this admirable sole that Clara has cooked for us and put you out of tune for this not unpraiseworthy Bordeaux. And to soothe my wounded feelings (but of course they aren't really wounded at all) he will talk of bass—that wonderful fish that can never be got in the London market. He swims up the great French rivers and you may eat his tender flesh on some terrace, relishing a white wine that brings out the sea in him—a Montrachet perhaps of a good year. There should be a Corot scene with not too many trees and a quiet river. You'll not be vexed there by any literary problem any more than Edward was when I told him on the way to Bayreuth that I didn't like his play. He was thinking only of the train, and whether the hotel would be near the theatre, and if at length we should extract the last hidden meaning from the Master. So you in such a Corot setting during the degustation of the bass would think not at all of George Moore and all the troubles of the writer's craft. You would be drawn into the gentle melancholy of evening, and become, so entranced would you be, genially reflective. And so, I should say with a half-aggrieved laugh, become a poet

for the first time. I did not say so, George Moore would reply.

George Moore's judgments on the novel are not only of high importance in themselves, but of first-rate value as showing the nature of his own aim and the means by which he achieved it. I have read nowhere any criticism at once so professional and so personal—criticism only possible in the rare case where a great performer is at the same time a great analyst. Nobody would dispute that a jockey would be the best judge of flat-racing, or a chef of a soufflé, and it would equally follow, one would suppose, that a poet should best adjudge other poets' work. Indeed it was Goethe who said that only he who had walked in the land of the bard could understand verse. Oddly the history of criticism by performers in the art criticised is full of tragic failure. There is hardly to be discovered a serious writer who has not either in praise or blame completely missed the mark. There is no time here to revive the old controversy of criticism against creation, but it is as full of meat as George Moore's battle of dogma and literature.

And am I an exception to the rule, George Moore would justly ask himself. He would

confess—for there are no bounds to his literary honesty—that many of his earlier judgments required revision. Certainly he under-rated Stevenson to make handsome amends later, and his views both on George Eliot and Henry James have wavered with his mood. But on the whole he has been steadfast to his views, and even, if posterity will not agree, they will see the reasonableness and often the wisdom of his judgment if they concede him his premises. Except in poetry, where he is wilful, regarding it as an art that in England at any rate can look after itself. For he professes himself enraptured by the profoundity of Edmund Gosse's platitude that English genius has passed into poetry. It is what every schoolboy is taught. The charm of George Moore is that he escaped education, and can therefore bring the fresh attention of a most sensitive mind to the obvious. He will eagerly agree that the English are poets, and that will leave him free to be capricious, since he will know that in this matter *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. There is no active need here to shake the English out of their prejudices and their inartistic sloth. Poetry never went fettered even in those drab days of Victoria, when the novelist led the world

to suppose that passion and truth had died with the 18th Century. The older Tennyson did, it is true, germinate a certain amount of moral fog, but he wrote "*Maud*" after his fortieth year—one of the most passionate poems in English or any other language. Poetry George Moore can and therefore does treat as an equal, with whom he may take liberties as with his friends. He does not need to look over the Channel for guidance and authority. He can speak to this Art as though it were John Eglinton or A.E. sitting with him late at night. He can afford to be a little malicious, convinced that nothing he says will impair the object nor mislead any intelligent reader as to his love and admiration for it. Indeed, if his friends had only understood his attitude to poetry, they might have been less hurt by his treatment of themselves. Edward Martyn—who Susan Mitchell says never read "*Hail and Farewell*" lest he should have to break with Moore—might have read it in peace and with enjoyment. *Mon ami Moore, mon ami Moore*, he should have murmured, using their time-honoured joke, and he would have realised that Moore was regarding him as so settled a figure that a draught now and then would not even dis-

turb the set of his hair. Gill is a different affair no doubt. For Moore meant to flay Pecuchet and did, watching him stroke his celebrated beard with the manner of a cat licking its fur. But I must not be distracted from the question to which I am addressing myself by the reflections engendered by Susan Mitchell's witty but rather too acid book. To return to prose and George Moore's judgments on it. Here there was no question of accepting the situation as it was. English prose had lamentably failed, and George Moore would know the reason why, even if every prose reputation must die in the process.

France! If Gosse had been in the mood he might have added one even more startling apothegm than that on poetry. He might have said (perhaps he actually did say, since everybody else has also said it) that the genius of the French had passed into prose, and George Moore with that odd humility which is as genuine as his most endearing vanity would have thanked him for the illumination. Probably he didn't say it, and George reached that copybook maxim by induction. But again with him it was not copybook, because he came upon it with the thrill of discovery. Happy, happy boy, who is for ever loving the

obvious and finding it for ever fair, yes and making it new and fair for all of us.

Naturally he turned to the French, since there was nothing in the England of his youth but the decline of Dickens, Thackeray and Trollope, and the heavy tame-bear dancings of Lytton, while in France there was Gautier who had but a moment ago passed to his immortality, and Balzac. I have already recorded what were his emotions on first reading Gautier. The silent watcher of literary skies seeing a new planet as strange and luminous as that great star Aldebaran. "*Mado-moiselle de Maupin*" was bound to excite him furiously, since it contained everything he adored—style, fearless approach to beauty, and behind all the setting of a *Fête Galante* an unerring grip upon one aspect of love—that experience upon which no story in England, he thought, had been founded for 300 years. Enchanting beyond measure were the conversations in bed between d'Albert and Rosette, remembering that with the solitary exception of Mr. and Mrs. Caudle, no conversations in these circumstances had ever been recorded in English. And what a conversation, at once how frank and how subtle, illuminating the one subject in which all men

and all women are at some time in their lives directly interested. Every sentence, every word, must have ravished the ingenuous mind of the reader. But this I have always believed, and this I could never have imagined, and this is what I experienced, and this, and this. He would let himself float into a happy dream, thinking of the perfect melodic ending when Mademoiselle de Maupin after satisfying her utmost curiosity with d'Albert slips into the bed of the poor deluded Rosette, who had loved her as a man. He would return from that reverie to think with a faint shudder of the English treatment of this to him adorable theme. Perhaps Tom Jones would cross his mind, the one English classic in which there is an apparent acceptance of the facts of human life. For doesn't her enamoured Tom Jones for a moment forget his Sophia in the arms of a "nasty Bristol trull" and doesn't his love (and Sophia's) remain undisturbed. Ah yes, he would reflect, anticipating himself in "Avowals," Fielding writes with gusto but all his people are dead. Tom Jones here and there comes to life, but neither Squire Allworthy nor Sophia ever existed at all. It is all Samuel Richardson with an occasional half-holiday at Margate. A classic! and his mind

would revert tenderly to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* appearing as Rosalind to her Orlando in his bedchamber. Hyperion to a satyr, he would inevitably murmur. He could not be expected to let his mind travel back to "*Robinson Crusoe*" as it did later, and to the consideration of why he had escaped the contagion of the picaresque which destroyed not only "*Humphrey Clinker*" but all English prose narrative till the immortal Jane rescued it with "vase-like" perfection. Why did the French escape that malady he asked himself later, since *Gil Blas* is the father of all that mode. If he had thought of it then, he would have no doubt evolved something extravagantly flattering to the Gallic and unflattering to the English genius. But he wouldn't then be exploring these critical avenues; he would be yielding himself to the charm of great art, and strangely learning his first lesson in naturalism and realism from the great romantic. He learned, that is, from Gautier that if you will but occupy yourself with the fact of love, and not its fiction, a thousand thousand stories await the happy novelist. Nor need they be "smutty" stories, though George Moore pretends to believe that, however regrettable it may be,

there is something actually of value in the “*Conte Drolatique*”—something which being ineradicably human must have expression. But he would not be thinking of “smutty” stories in the presence of one of the unsmuttiest books ever written. No! he saw a speck of fertile dust no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed, and already like an Indian conjurer visions of the consummate flower would dazzle him. The *Lovers at Orelay* and the tale of *Marie Pellegrin* were being written by Gautier in Moore’s mind at that moment.

This was the first great revelation. The second was Balzac, whom George Moore did not fail to compare on equal terms with Shakespeare, never quite sure, however, that he had not overstepped the limits of decency in doing so. (Yes, decency, for in the matter of literary rectitude George Moore is a savage prude.) If all that George Moore had written of Balzac were gathered into one place, the result would be not only a considerable book but one of the most conclusive pieces of literary criticism in existence. I shan’t follow him through his paper on the Master in “*The Conversations*,” for that would involve a larger digression than any that I may permit

myself. I will take only one point and make such use of it as I can. George Moore is writing of "*Une Vieille Fille*"—one of the first books in the canon—and he is speaking of Mademoiselle Cormon's person. Balzac has described it in detail, and has devoted a few lines of hard description to her large flat feet, and her leg, which she often showed unintentionally when she lifted her dress. It was not like the leg of a woman: "it was a sinewy leg, with a small calf, hard and pronounced like a sailor's." And, cries George Moore, the whole of Rose Cormon is in that leg. What is the significance of that? Why, of course, that Balzac gives life to all the objects of his observation, and that a button of Balzac would fasten a god's tunic and stay for ever bright and in position, and that a leg, like the detail of a Greek vase, will outface the enmity of time. George Moore has a distaste for Meredith as a prose writer because of his trick of concealing himself behind a thicket of fiery words, where, he suggests, the princess of prose narrative not merely sleeps but snores. He might nevertheless have drawn a significant parallel between Mlle. Cormon's leg and Sir Willoughby Patterne's. He would have said that the

French leg was one upon which any woman could walk, but Sir Willoughby's is a purely literary leg—a broken anchor of a leg—dragged in to shuffle away the story. Sir Willoughby never walked on the leg, he bowed it, he fluted on it, he mourned with it. It was a conjurer's leg, a poet's leg (and since Meredith drew it, in my view, a great poet's leg), but it was never a man's leg. It was therefore an insincere leg, a leg that was not serious. Because it did not belong to the narrative but to the author, and no novelist has the right to give his hero three legs.

None of this would have been present in George Moore's mind as he devoured, nay lived in, the pages of the "Comédie Humaine." This was at last the narrative for which he had been born, a thousand men and women and each one living out life by virtue of the inner necessity of character reacting on environment. If Gautier had showed him that the whole province of love lay virgin and undespoiled for an English pen, Balzac seemed to have declared that the same was true not only of all men and women in all the relations with one another and with the world, but of legs, and buttons, and trees, and the dust on the table. Not even Chesterton would have

more ardently adored the physical world than Moore at that crowning moment. "But, by God," he would exclaim, "it isn't possible, it just isn't possible. The whole of life and nobody has ever touched it." He might quite conceivably have fainted.

No wonder then that he compared the Titan with Shakespeare and asked whether Lucien was inferior to Hamlet, Eugenie Grandet to Desdemona, or her father to Shylock? And less wonder that he wrote: "there is no passion that he has not touched, and what is more marvellous, he has given to each in art a place equivalent to the place it occupies in nature; his intense and penetrating sympathy for human life and all that concerns it enabled him to surround the humblest subjects with awe, and to crown them with the light of tragedy." A truer criticism was never written, but it was much more than criticism. It was an apprehension of his own destiny in letters, and if Gautier had given Moore his love-scenes, Balzac had given him "Evelyn Innes" and nearly all "Esther Waters." He had graduated in the University of his choice.

We know almost all that we need of the influences that moulded George Moore, but I think that he will insist (and if he does who

am I to say him nay?) on applying the general principles which he has thus mastered to the history of English prose narrative. But before I concede him his exchanges with Gosse, I may on my own account be allowed to make one platitudinous observation, like all platitudes an apparent paradox. When George Moore praised Balzac's universal human sympathy he was unconsciously (yes, I think unconsciously) isolating that quality in himself. For quite simply and shortly George Moore has the widest human sympathy of any English novelist—which, as you rightly observe is the exact opposite of the accepted view. Do you nevertheless insist that I shall elucidate the obvious? You do? Very well then. I contrast Dickens and George Moore and I begin with Moore's own appreciation of that huge splendour, that riotous fertility. Gosse has said that Dickens was the first man of English genius who gave the whole of his genius to the novel reader; he commiserates with him in passing, with a certain gentle condescension, on his lack of education, but claims for him that he was a genius, as far indeed as any Englishman could, Gosse thinks, hope to be. George Moore will not deny the spontaneity of Dickens's great talent, but he

regrets his lack of seriousness. And why? Not because he is a great jester, but because he is frivolous in his observation of emotions. It is worth looking a little closely at what is meant here by frivolity. Human sympathy means neither pity nor tenderness unless they float out of the object perceived as perfume from a flower. It certainly does not mean a warm geyser-like rush of emotion when motherhood or infancy is mentioned, because though either of these states may induce a vital emotion, in themselves they are as meaningless as a barrowful of bananas. It means neither an indignation against wrong nor an immense appetite for such externalities as Christmas celebrations. It means actually and only a fierce and vibrant understanding of the dark heart of man, an insatiable curiosity and a reckless determination to set down exactly what has been observed and deduced from observation.

There can be no question that the genius of Dickens was far more abundant than that of Moore, just as it was more abundant than that of the Goncourts, Flaubert, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, de Maupassant and even Gautier, though possibly not exceeding that of Balzac. But Dickens would not wait to purge, direct

and concentrate on his object, and art will never be taken by barnstorm. Hence first that radiant "typicality" in his characters which blew them up like balloons, and sent them sky-high in airy voyage only too often out of sight of mother-earth and common humanity. Let us even admit that one or two of the comic characters rank almost with Falstaff. They are still observed from without; they are not patiently explored, relentlessly evoked from their own nerves. Events are still imposed upon them, while the serious characters are hardly ever observed at all. They are Virtue, Vice with a dagger of lath, Shame, Remorse, all the seven deadly virtues and vices waiting mournfully on the breath of that exuberant life which Dickens could so easily have, had he cared, inspired. He would not do so because he lacked human sympathy in the direct unmitigated way in which it has been vouchsafed to George Moore to possess it. For he, with a much less vitality, does yet with a curiosity, sometimes so vivacious as to seem morbid, trail the least vestige of a human trait to its origin and so on to its sequel. Like Balzac he is unimpressed by general emotions, knowing that each emotion is private, lonely and unshared, and that only if it is exposed

in its isolation can it be revivified. In vain does Dickens stoke up the fires of pity for the wretched Smike in "Nicholas Nickleby." He has never sympathized with him. He has generalized ill-treatment of young unprotected children and struck an attitude. That is prejudice, not sympathy; it is to deny the victim the one solace and protection that is possible—understanding. George Moore would not have raged against Squeers nor imagined anything as sadistically grotesque as the schoolmaster crying that he had never had the sensation of beating a boy in a hackney cabriolet. Squeers would have been presented much more horribly because his cruelty and rapacity would have flowed from his character and Smike would have been the natural projection of these qualities in his oppressor. I do not, of course, mean that Moore's interests are as wide as those of Dickens, but they are diamond beside paste in their biting power. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the mordant curiosity in Moore cries; as much truth as is compatible with a generalized conception, urges Dickens. The first is human sympathy; the second is artistic laziness. And to repeat, with the possible exception of Jane I know of no other English novelist who

has equally with George Moore that capacity for human contact.

Moore learned to practise, or to evoke it in himself, from Balzac; and in the light of that knowledge he turned his cold reflective eye on the course of English prose narrative. He concluded that until Jane wrote "Pride and Prejudice" there was no such thing as an English prose narrative, meaning by that a tale which was made out of the characters as a wild flower grows to its shape, and was not like a prinked and curled chrysanthemum elaborately periwigged and reformed from without. It is noticeable however that Sterne goes straight to George Moore's heart, and suggests the true reflection that in the art of the Essay the English need fear no rival —Sterne, de Quincey, Landor, Lamb, Pater and R.L.S. a galaxy, George Moore would exclaim with lighted eye—tout ce qu'il y a du bien. (He hates French phrases, but when he thinks of the novel, he thinks, as Sickert used to teach, in French, and perhaps for the same reason.) Ah yes, Sterne, but not the author of "Tristram Shandy," but the chronicler of "The Sentimental Journey." Greek like a bronze satyr, George Moore exclaims, and he wishes that he might have

read it for the first time in a felucca with lateen sails. Vocal magic as durable as the stroke of the chisel on Carrara! Nor less so that dreamer of words shaped like the curl of smoke from the lazy pipe—de Quincey drowsily enchanting us with the poppy and mandragora. Or Landor richer in conceit than any and yet master of every wandering genie enclosed within the fiery ring of his magic power, or Lamb unmatched picker-up of unconsidered trifles the Autolycus of Tempe, or the great brocaded page of Pater, or R.L.S. before Colvin misled him. Ah, these are the names, these are the names!

But prose narrative is a different thing. Who is there to set beside Jane, and who can live in the company of Eliza Bennett and Lady Catherine de Burgh. Faultlessly with scarcely a wrinkle of the brow or pressure of the wrist she watched her people move into their own life. She even held her breath lest that slight impulse might give them an alien vitality. Unlike God she made them not in her image but in their own. Hers too was a human comedy with fewer characters than that of Balzac, but in its smaller compass as rich, as humanly sympathetic and as fundamentally alive in the least detail, so that the

poke-bonnet that Lydia unnecessarily bought still tempts all reasonable young women by its eternally inaccessible uselessness.

After Jane, it seems, the deluge, or before because, though Sir Walter Scott did not as Mr. Kipling mistakenly supposes die before Jane he is her elder. A little iconoclasm, if you please, says George Moore. He has only one doubt of this external writer and that is that Balzac liked him. But even Homer nods, and did not Goethe—the wisest of all men—bow the knee to Byron. The Brontes—yes—though Charlotte was weak in her tale, and Anne, who of all has the greatest intensity, wrote but the one novel and ended it wrong. As to the pomps of Disraeli and vanities of Lytton—God let them pass for men, they do not for writers. Trollope—the perfect name for his slow shuffling style and his inordinate ignorance of anything behind the tea-cups. So that till Henry James and Kipling there is nothing need hold us back. Henry James was an artist, even a great artist, but one who insisted on creating the serpents of his own style in order that he might perish continuously and happily, a self boa-constricted Laocoon. Kipling has the male style in excelsis, but alas! he has the he-man heart.

He knows a trick worth two of that. In vain the electrics sizzle; they do but brilliantly illuminate an empty goods-yard out of which the last engine has just puffed itself into oblivion.

Phew! It is time to lean back in the chair after this mass-murder and ask whether judgments so sweeping and so vigorous can be defended. They can, Moore would say, for consider what Zola with nothing more than painstaking capacity of the highest second-class could achieve, and then remember Tourgeniev. Zola (it was currently reported) rode out of Paris on his bicycle for an afternoon in order to familiarise himself with peasant life. Well, he saw a good deal in the three or four hours at his disposal, because he was really looking. He was serious, that type, and though not gifted with genius, how determined to tear out the innermost secret of all that he observed. See, he shouted to his eyes, see, damn you!

Of course, George Moore would say, the Slavs are born story-tellers, as are some of the Irish. They have so much space, so much time, and all winter when everything except the inventive faculty is dead. How incessantly they crowd into life those indeter-

minate grey figures lit up with the brilliance of emotion as sudden as a lightning-flash, and dark thereafter as a cloud. How are we to set the English beside them? That, George Moore, is what Arnold Bennett has recently observed in the "Evening Standard." Arnold Bennett? but I do not see prose narrative settling down among us. It will be like a melancholy date-bearing palm on the Riviera, holding out its dried fruit in silent protest against its exile. Gosse was right, as he always was. The English genius will continue to go into poetry—if literature continues at all. I do not mean that I bid farewell to that prospect as I bade farewell to Ireland. I have my fears, no more. There was the genius of Dickens, that will not be repeated in a century or longer, and if he could do no more when conditions still made writing possible, what dare we, what can we hope?

I remember, says Moore, reading "Marius the Epicurean" for the first time. When I came to the chapter headed "White Nights" I laid down the book saying "there is something that I did not think possible—the luminous understanding that invests the things understood with its own quality and yet does not constrain theirs." I

am tired now and I should like to go to my bed thinking not of failure and struggle and the passing of time but of that perfection as it first came to me—the image of sleep quietly dispossessing the sister-image of death. Could a day end better than to be shaped by the dying fall of so pure a voice, moulding the following silence into its own noble curve?

## Chapter V. *The Writer*

I CLOSE the visionary door in Ebury Street softly, and walk out into the London night. Clara has drawn all the curtains, and there is not a chink of light to be seen. Deserved sleep has descended on the little household, and I musingly must make my way home, wondering how I can possibly end the booklet without at least analysing one of the books that George Moore wrote. I wish indeed, I thought, that I could leave it, not doing more than giving a list of his works, and beseeching the reader to judge of them, partly perhaps in the light of George Moore's day as I have tried to portray it. How much simpler and in the end how more satisfying if this might serve as a whet and not blunt the appetite by seeking foolishly to pre-digest that ethereal substance. For I conceive it to be the critic's task to make a mood in which his author can be safely and quietly approached. To claim that I have done as much would be arrogant, no doubt, but shall

I not inevitably do less if I interpose any opinion that I have formed between George Moore and his audience? So far I have attempted with all my force to make him reveal himself, for I blush to think how much that has gone before is mere transliteration. What can I add, since on my own premises nobody but a prose-writer can hope to explain another, even if he can understand him. I should have made George Moore talk to me of the writing of "A Drama in Muslin," that flowing conventional tale, on "Esther Waters" and on why he believes "The Untilled Field" to be one of his major feats. He would have told me how for months he believed that "Esther Waters" was worthless, and was only gradually persuaded that it had some merit when the world forced the view on him. I would have asked why he should from the outset have regarded "The Confessions of a Young Man" as of indubitable force. And I should have begged him at least to comment on his fatal attraction for the theatre. How comes it that he has still a paternal fondness for "The Strike at Arlingford," does not seek to mitigate "The Coming of Gabrielle" and was not displeased with the trifle called "The

Making of an Immortal" which, ridiculously, because of the circumstances in which it was produced, made of George Moore a newspaper "feature"? How strong, how irresistible that impulse which has bade him refashion "The Apostle" into "The Passing of the Essenes." And is it possible that he has suddenly falsified all that preceded it and at last shown that he has the blood of a dramatist within him?

There is no help to be had from outside. George Moore somewhere says that all the articles on Balzac are bad, but there's so astonishingly little written on George Moore. Susan Mitchell's small brochure and Freeman's "Life" and what beside? Almost, one would say, that legendary consolation of the ignored —a conspiracy of silence. But if not deliberate, why this absence of comment on the most important contribution to the novel since Jane Austen? If it had been Hardy now, a small pantehnicon would have overflowed with the books that the all-wise John Wilson would have sent me from Bumpus. But if I go to him in his little glass-room at the back of the second floor and ask pleadingly for help, he will, I know, only shake his head at me. George Moore has always been a

rebel, but the causes for which he fought are gained. Is it his victories that we can't forgive him or is it that it is still believed that his editions are as limited as his outlook?—both absurdly untrue assumptions, since Messrs. Heinemann have made him universally available, and because, as I have attempted to show, he is the most and not the least human of our prose-writers.

Susan Mitchell should assist. She dedicates the book to "A.E. and John Eglinton who alone were treated mercifully, by the author of 'Ave, Salve et Vale' and who are therefore not likely to be indignant at the association of their names with the study of George Moore." Here's riches! I am tempted though it's irrelevant to set that beside Moore's dedication to "A Story-teller's Holiday." "Dear Lady of my thoughts, dear Lady Cunard, Time turns all things into analogues and symbols, and in the course of the year I have come to think of you as an evening fountain under embosoming trees. The fountain murmurs, sings, exults: it welcomes every coming minute; and when the dusk deepens in the garden and the gallants enfold their ladies in scarves and veils, the rout disperses and the fountain sings alone the

sorrows of the water-lilies to the moon." Immaculate felicity! Lonely fountain were it not better to leave you in the deepening dusk of the garden waiting until the last ray of the moon has faded from Terminus, till there is no sound save that imperturbable cadence, cool as water, and, like fountain-water, for ever renewing itself. To leave you so, and let detraction, ignorance and even the feelings wounded by genius mix with the dust to which they belong.

Tempting indeed. Yet a little more is needed before you are left to your solitary water-conjuring, and in the day of wrath, in the day of reckoning when values disperse in a bubble, let Miss Mitchell, like David and the Sibyll in their own despite, be present as witness.

Miss Mitchell writes of George Moore: "Here is a man, Moore, who has to many minds profaned his home, his parents, his most sacred ties, to whom writing is father, mother, home, lover and friends, life itself, who when he ceases to write will cease to live and will crumple up, shapeless, nameless, mortal." Is that the unforgivable offence—to leave all and follow one faith only, is the unpardonable error to be a Calvin and a Grand Inquisitor of the æsthetic faith—to be

inhuman for the sake of all men and all women? Do we seek to pillage George Moore because he and his kind are for ever strangers in our midst, but strangers that astonishingly come wearing human shape? Do we stone the prophets because their rules are not our rules, and their sorrows not our sorrows?

I think Susan Mitchell has come near the truth, nearer than when she writes with a gush of offensive tenderness that after reading the story of "Esther Waters," told with a most moving sympathy, she was inclined to cry "For this thy sins are forgiven thee." But there is not a trace more of humanity in George Moore's picture of the unhappy maid-servant than in the sometimes droll representation of "dear Edward." He is judging, not pitying: he is recording with unflinching and unchanging excitement the facts of life as they seed, flower and wither. He is not afraid with any amazement in the face of childbirth, death, private friendship, public wrong, or even love. He is a scribe and what he has written he has written. Like Balzac he has the power to invest with interior heat. He writes of the fox-terrier Jim in "A Story-teller's Holiday" with a reality that Kipling could not approach in "Garm" because

George Moore was looking at the dog, but Kipling at his own reaction to the dog. He was not pretending to give his heart to a dog to tear: he had better uses for his heart. It had to go on pumping blood into the brain while it recorded without stress or comment the long unsatisfied lust for rabbit. Or the baby seal that Hugh and Mary took away in their boat in "*Hugh Ronfert*" who cried bitterly because the parents were following in the water, and both parents and baby knew of each other's near neighbourhood. Not a performing seal like "*Padda*" of *Manhood End*, but a thing restored to its parents for some casual reason having no relation to sentiment. This is true human sympathy, to reveal with equal fidelity the fortunate and the unfortunate, the pitiful and the unpitied and think not at all of their effect but of their cause—the impulse of life that like the horizon can never be overtaken, but whose pursuit is all. And not only to observe, but to reinforce observation by patient inquiry, as when George Moore learned from a shepherd how lambs taken from the ewe would be suckled and used the knowledge to enable Jesus in "*The Brook Kerith*" to save the ram-lamb that he was bearing across the hills of Palestine to

redeem the perished flock of the Essenes. So in little things, and so in the larger, as for example love. George Moore does not desire to pose as a passionate lover, as Miss Mitchell assumes. There may be a man George Moore who prides himself on easy or difficult conquests and who like the dying Vicomte de Keroual in St. Ives said, "We are handsome in the family and even I myself, I have had my successes, the memories of which still charm me." But there is another and a greater whose interest in love is as impersonal and penetrating as his interest in the fox-terrier, the baby-seal, and the ram-lamb. And Miss Mitchell is, in my view, supremely wrong in finding one episode in "Memoirs of my Dead Life" "warm-hearted" and the "others not fit to be above ground." It is not so. The tale of Marie Pelegrin which she selects for approval ends with the death of that wild lady as gravely and delicately drawn as Yeats's poem in "The Wild Swans at Coole." Upon a dying Lady:

"And when she meets our gaze her eyes  
are laughter lit,  
Her speech a wicked tale that we may  
vie with her,

Matching our broken-hearted art against  
her wit,  
Thinking of saints and Petronius  
Arbiter."

But that is only what the melodic line dictated, and George Moore followed the line with the same undeniable sympathy that prescribed the search for the missing pyjamas in Orelay. Each of us is entitled to make our own choice on grounds of ethics, but none on those grounds is entitled to impute warm heartedness or villainy to an artistic faith which is not liable to these criteria. To forgive everything (if I may invert the French proverb) is to understand everything. George Moore forgave everything that excited his curiosity, and he has therefore understood much. His curiosity was not world-wide but it comprehended the agonies of a housemaid as well as the fantastic problem of Abelard. That is sympathy, and that is why in the end George Moore turned to the tale of Jesus.

I am tempted I confess to say of "The Brook Kerith"—"Others abide our question : thou art free " and to leave it quiet as some Tyrolean mountain when there's no wind blowing across the moraines. I would in my

cowardice have rather turned aside to "Heloise," the gables of old Paris, and that beautiful ride of the lovers through the dappled forest. Or I might have rehearsed something of the tale of the writing of "Aphrodite in Aulis." It was begun I'd say in the growing shade of ill-health and George Moore went into the nursing home, not knowing if he would ever come back to finish it. Every one of his books was an unconscionable time being born, and as he lay in the bed pale and still he wondered often if this birth had been too long delayed. As Ernest Longworth says in the preface to "The Story-teller's Holiday" he swore to himself that if ever the pen were in his hand again he would make short work of revision and re-orchestration. He would just toss the manuscript to Miss Kingdon and ask her to arrange it for the publisher, but with returning health he began to be conscious of flaws and insecurities. The first chapter with the account of the fishmonger father in Athens did not give out the theme, he thought. Better begin with the son striding down—a magnificent figure with a great staff—and have him there as he was wanted from the first page. As Plato brought in Socrates on the way back from the

Piræus in the first lines of "The Republic," I thought, and as though he had guessed my thought George Moore said that he wanted him an actor as the curtain rose. That will mean re-writing the first part, and laying aside much, if not most of what is already written. And the thought of the work still to be done was a drug more potent even than those of the great physician to whom he dedicates the book in gratitude. There is no such thing as finality, he said, but I can take a few more steps. Would you give me now a few fresh names to turn over in my mind to fit a comic poet, and what sort of an epitaph would you think should be written for the sculptor's pet wolf, whose statue is to be set on the road that leads up to the Temple? Then he told me of the pet wolf he had in Dublin and how he would put his paws on his shoulders like a great dog. That's why, I said, you speak so often of wolves not only in "The Brook" but in "A Story-teller's Holiday" and even let Marban and his darling nun be devoured by them. No! that was Alec Trusselby's tale. I was sorry that they should be eaten, and yet I don't see how else the tale could have ended. But I know enough of wolves to say that one would run away after a mate and still

recognise his master in the forest years later, and come fawning and leaping. It would be easy, I said, to write a Greek Anthology epitaph thus:

Artemis, this wolf that never pillaged flock,  
I kennel in thy charge. Be gentle, thou  
And guard him bronze and silent on the  
rock,  
Pledge of his love and my completed  
vow.

I'd like you to use that or something like it, I thought, but George Moore knew better. It was to be the work of the comic poet and must be looser in texture. Some weeks later he read me out the hexameters that he had composed. Not very Greek I said; but very like a comic poet he replied, a good answer to which no rejoinder was possible.

I had much rather, as I have said, do anything than return to "The Brook" and yet since all the roads of Moore's life lead to Jerusalem, I must. There are some who say that you cannot see Mont Blanc from Dijon. They lie; I have seen it on a hot day of summer small, distinct and almost terrifying half

across France. So across the plains of George Moore's life I see always that peak, the highest in Europe I have sometimes thought, or at any rate the highest for me. For when I read it for the first time I was no less moved than George Moore by *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and I know that if I might take only one book with me to a desert island it would be this that I should reject at the last moment in favour of Shakespeare. I hear the first sentence always in the back of my mind like the invocation of "The Magic Flute," so perfect, so simple, so contrapuntal in its melody. "It was at the end of a summer evening, long after his usual bedtime that Joseph, sitting on his grandmother's knee, heard her tell that Kish having lost his asses sent Saul, his son, to seek them in the land of the Benjamites and in the land of Shalisha, whither they might have strayed. But they were not in those lands, son." With low whisper of the flute the harmony begins, and how better than have the boy tell his grandmother that he too would be a prophet, and how he dreamed that Samuel came to him and would not answer his question whether he, Joseph, was to be a prophet. Dan, his father, was struck by the boy's pale face and sent him off to the

hills, but not before he had promised that Azariah should teach him the Laws. Thus from the first page the tragedy of Joseph's life and that of Jesus is written. For Joseph is to love Jesus and to turn from him in his hour of need, to find the greatest prophet of all and to fail him by want of belief, and Jesus in his turn is to be lifted down by Joseph from the Cross, ere his death, and to be nursed back to forget his godhead.

An impossible task for any writer to attempt. For to write of Jesus as a man would be either blasphemy or dullness. But George Moore knew that if only he could see Jesus as Joseph saw him he would be able to see him for the first time. I shall grow to love and understand him with Joseph's growing love and understanding, he thought. The story of the gospels will come down from Sinai, and build itself anew in the accent of a simple and anxious heart. I shall grow up with Joseph, learning the law with him, seeing the Roman games at Tiberias, and taking my part in Dan's business of camel transport. I'll be by him when he talks to the fishermen of Galilee, and since I already know something of nets and draughts of fishes, it will not be difficult to understand how they too in turn

would see the son of the carpenter—one prophet among the many that were in the hills. But I shan't be able to wait for Jesus till the moment when the Gospels send him out as a teacher. I'll have to find his masters—the Essenes, who had their monastery like the old Irish ones that Alec Trusselby had in his mind. So I shall have two ways to come at him, through the mouths of babes and sucklings, and through the mind of that wise monk Hazael. But if I am to understand the monks I must see the cranny in which their monastery hung, and look for myself on the hills upon which their eyes rested.

With Joseph, Hazael and Jesus in his mind, George Moore went on his pilgrimage to Palestine, and one weary and hot day after riding for long hours he saw his windy road and the coign of hills with the Greek monastery resting there. I'll climb up, he said to his ass driver, and clinging to the animal's tail scrambled up the long and dangerous road, hoping to make his need known to the monks. But they spoke only a bastard Greek and could do no more than give him a night's resting-place. With the dawn he rose from his cell and looked out as Jesus, he thought, had looked out a thousand times from his

visionary retreat when he returned as a shepherd. For a shepherd he was, and had the shepherd's eye for pasturage, the shepherd's love for his dogs, and the passion for the sheep. I can write the tale now, George Moore said, closing his eyes, so that he might for ever enclose the scene within their compass.

The tale grew therefore out of Joseph and the Essenes, Jesus entering upon it as a part of the Arimathean's love and of the monkish understanding. A very gentle puzzled figure he would be, staggering always on the Via Dolorosa of his too great love of man under the heavy Cross of his Vision of God. Dearly would Joseph have loved to relieve him of the Cross, but, as when he had cried in vain to Samuel, so now he cried in vain to his own faith. And all that he could do for his beloved master was in the end to plead for his body on the Cross from a human Pilate that was friendly disposed to the grave young merchant:

“ Into these arms from the Cross descended  
They brought my Lord and laid  
Upon my knees the sorrowful splendid  
Weight of his head.”

The head was not bowed in death, for the Jesus of Joseph and the Essenes was God only in the universal suffering that he vainly endured, and in the puzzled heart that cried, "My Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Quietly in the withdrawn house with Esora, Joseph nursed his beloved back to some show of health. It was with natural things that he weaned him back from death, and on the day when Jesus saved the puppies from the cat the time had come for his return to the Essenes and the life of a shepherd. Joseph rode with him over the hills and left him once again, the well-beloved that he could not save but only shelter.

Hazael folded his wanderer to his heart and set the crook again in the hand of Jesus; who saved the ruined flocks with a ram-lamb that he bore in his arms across the hills. There that Jesus of Joseph and the Essenes grew old in beautiful simplicity, returning to the monastery at the last and to the fated encounter with Paul, flying from those who sought to slay him for preaching Jesus. Paul preached him to the Essenes and only Mathias could stand against him till the pale tall Jesus of Nazareth, that Paul preached as a God, stood before him as a shepherd, who had

suffered for his sheep. A madman! cried Paul, and rushed away. But Jesus walked with him to Caesarea, Paul going out into the world to preach him and Jesus returning quiet and musing to Hazael and the brethren. "This is not my Jesus," Paul said, "but a madman," nor ours, says the Christian world. No, but a Jesus that might have been, and who for ever is in the pages of "The Brook Kerith." George Moore has understood that God could only save man by becoming flesh. How else invested is a man to understand God?

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